WHAT ARE YOU TRYING NOT TO SAY?: MEANING-MAKING AND (MIS)UNDERSTANDINGS IN POSTOBSERVATION CONFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR SUPERVISORS

by

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(Under the Direction of Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what occurs during postobservation conferences between teachers and supervisors, what meanings and understandings each participant constructs from these conferences, and what factors may account for any disparities between participants in meanings and understandings. This qualitative field study used elements of conversation analysis, discourse analysis, politeness theory, and hermeneutics to uncover how participants constructed meaning from their own speech and that of their interlocutor.

Findings included a typology of speech acts engaged in during the conference. Supervisor speech took the form of questions, directions, and commendations. Teacher speech was normally a response to supervisor speech and could be reflective or pseudo-reflective. The findings regarding meanings constructed from conference speech were illuminating. The response "I do not value your feedback" could arise from interpersonal conflicts, the perception that the supervisor was not well-informed enough about the teacher"s practice to render a judgment, or the sense that supervisors had been instructed by their superiors to stress particular issues. "I do not understand your feedback" emerged when supervisor speech was made unclear by the

overuse of politeness strategies or when teacher ability was outstripped by supervisor expectations. Finally, “I have a lot of growing to do” could be a positive or a negative response. Some teachers felt well-equipped by their conference interactions to make changes in their practice. Others were defeated by disproportionately negative feedback or overwhelmed by more feedback than they could process.

Implications and recommendations for practitioners and researchers are numerous. They include the need to resolve the role of the supervisor. One approach would be to consider themselves teachers of teachers and model “best” teaching practice during conferences. A second implication was the need to remain vigilant about mindfully using ideas and terminology. Finally, researchers and practitioners are encouraged to search out means enhancing feelings of trust and respect among school personnel.

INDEX WORDS: postobservation conference, clinical supervision cycle, observation cycle, high school teachers, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, politeness theory, hermeneutics, analytic induction, convenience sampling

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most states require that all public school teachers be evaluated regularly. However states have tremendous latitude in how they interpret the term "regularly" and how they enact the process of teacher evaluation (Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007). Only 15 states require that experienced teachers be evaluated yearly, and only eight states mandate a postobservation conference as part of the evaluation process (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2009). In the absence of uniform state or federal mandates, districts are at liberty to fashion their own supervision and evaluation requirements. Some districts impose more comprehensive procedures than required by state law, but there is little oversight as to how these procedures are enacted or how successful they are in improving teacher effectiveness.

One of the unquestioned assumptions in education has been that the use of the clinical supervision cycle accomplishes something positive with regard to teaching performance. An effective supervision cycle is supposed to build the capacity of teachers to do their jobs more effectively even when they are not being observed. Supervision "should result in heightened autonomy for the teacher and, particularly, in strengthened capacities for independent, objective self-analysis" (Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1993, p. 45) as well as "foster . . . self-directed learning" (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005, p. 46).

The clinical cycle should work to develop "in beginners and in experienced teachers a conviction and a value: that teaching, as an intellectual and social act, is subject to intellectual analysis" (Mosher & Purpel, 1972, p. 79). Such teachers will be "analytical of [their] own

performance, open to help from others, and withal self-directing" (Cogan, 1973, p. 12). Few would argue against a process that can accomplish all that.

As it is currently practiced, supervision appears to fall somewhat short of its ideal. At worst, it can become "snoopervis[ion] (Zepeda, 2007, p. 76), "ferret[ing] out and penaliz[ing] ineffectiveness" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 90). While part of the role of a supervisor is to identify ineffective practice, betraying teachers" trust and administering penalties without providing teachers the means to remedy them is likely to lead to a decrease in job satisfaction and higher teacher turnover, a problem that is already at crisis proportions (Ingersoll, 1997, 2002a, 2002b).

At best, some teachers consider the observation cycle a meaningless ritual during which the supervisor goes through the motions of evaluating teacher effectiveness, usually to satisfy external mandates, but there is no genuine expectation on either the teacher"s or the supervisor"s part that the process will result in substantive change (Blumberg, 1980; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). Said one teacher, "I have never had an experience where I felt any valuable professional growth occurred [as a result of supervision]. I have not received any valuable information, nor have I changed my teaching approaches because of that information" (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998, p. 5).

Why do so many teachers fail to experience any growth as a result of their supervision experience and "[f]or what reasons . . . might a teacher challenge, refuse to act on, or merely ignore a suggestion even if it is appropriate and helpful?" (Roberts, 1992, p. 13). Blumer (1969) explained that those who would understand others" behaviors must recognize that individuals" relationships with the environment are products of the meanings they attach to the objects in that environment. Thus, two people experiencing the same event can construct two completely different, often diametrically opposed, interpretations of the event (Blumer, 1969; Sacks, 1984).

Such may be the case of supervisory conferences. Rather than assuming that clinical supervision is unquestionably positive, it may be "more appropriate if this assumption were treated as a hypothesis to be tested" (Alfonso, Firth, & Neville, 1981, p. 39). The current study was designed to begin the testing of that assumption.

Background of the Study

Teaching is an unusual profession for a number of reasons. Since its inception, it has been marked by high turnover. From the Colonial period to the mid-1800s, when the profession was populated almost exclusively by men, teachers were largely short-term and part-time employees who used teaching as a means of support while preparing for "the serious business of life" (Rury, 1989, p. 11). As large, urban centers developed and school systems became more formalized, women began to move into the profession in greater numbers. By 1900, 74% of all U.S. teachers were female. The high turnover remained, in part because some districts proscribed married women from teaching and in part because social mores favored domesticity in women (Rury, 1989). Teaching continues to be marked by high turnover in large measure because it is a highly feminized profession, and many of its members teach until they are ready to marry and raise a family (Lortie, 1975; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

To counterbalance the high turnover, school systems and colleges of education made accommodations for "eased entry" into the profession, notably "publicly supported college units of education not noted for their high selectivity" (Lortie, 1975, p. 18). These circumstances have led to the rarely acknowledged problem that teachers, as a collective, may not be the most intellectually vibrant nor professionally committed individuals. The problem of low standards and high turnover is exacerbated by the fact that there is little scrutiny of teachers‟ day-to-day

practice. Thus they may respond to administrative directives by "comply[ing] only symbolically or fitfully or not at all" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 9).

Of the innumerable educational reforms that have made their way into the nation's public schools in the last century, remarkably few have dealt directly with the fundamental question of how to build the capacity in each teacher to do her unique job most effectively "in ways that result in most students receiving engaging instruction in challenging academic content" (Elmore, 2004, p. 14). As a result, a great deal of teaching gets accomplished without a commensurate amount of learning (Pajak, 1993). Essential to reversing this condition is effective use of supervision that will effect continuous growth throughout a teacher's career. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, clinical supervision, in its ideal state, should do this.

The clinical supervision process entails a minimum of three discrete parts: a preobservation conference, the observation of a lesson, and a postobservation conference. If practiced in the manner intended, clinical supervision should accomplish several things. It should tighten the coupling between individual classroom teachers and the school's professed organizational goals (Rosenholtz, 1989). The conferences should build trust between the teacher and the supervisor, strengthening their relationship and rendering it more productive (Cogan, 1973; Zepeda, 2007). Preobservation conferences should provide an opportunity for the teacher to "rehearse" the lesson to be observed (Cogan, 1973; Glatthorn, 1997; Zepeda, 2007) and make explicit the supervisor's observation criteria (Cogan, 1973; Glatthorn, 1997; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007). Postobservation conferences allow the supervisor and teacher to review what happened during the observed lesson (Glickman et al., 2005), make sense of it, and plan next steps (Glatthorn, 1997; Glickman et al., 2005; Golhammer et al., 1993; Zepeda, 2007). This process of reflection and planning should ultimately result in a self-perpetuating upward spiral of

improved professional practice wherein teachers plan, reflect on, and refine their teaching even in the absence of external supervision.

Statement of the Problem

Many public schools use some variation on the clinical cycle of instructional supervision, but the research community has tended to assume that what is prescribed in the supervision literature is what happens inside a supervisory conference. The community has further assumed that these prescriptions are effective. These assumptions do not appear well-founded. As clinical supervision is currently practiced, it appears rarely to have the intended results. Zepeda and Ponticell (1998) explained, "For the majority of teachers . . . supervision at its worst was a dog and pony show . . . [with the teacher] demonstrating all the „right" steps . . . on the supervisor"s checklist" (p. 5). When conducted in this fashion, supervision may actually increase teacher isolation by diminishing the trust between teachers and administrators.

Books and articles about clinical supervision have tended either to be theoretical (e.g., Alfonso, et al., 1981) or, if empirical, to rely on self-report (e.g., Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). Of the few publications that presented audio-recorded conference data, the scope of some (Fisch, 1995; Hayashi, 1996) did not permit analysis of the various meanings the participants co-constructed from their conversations. Others examined the supervision of pre-service teachers (Bertone, Chaliès, Clarke, & Méard, 2006; Fernandez & Erbilgin, 2009; Zeichner & Liston, 1985) or university teaching assistants (Vásquez, 2004; Vásquez & Reppen, 2007), limiting the applicability of the research to P-12 contexts. Still others based their analyses completely on observations (Roberts, 1990; Waite, 1993) without a systematic investigation of whether the participants found the researchers" conclusions about their beliefs accurate.

Blumberg (1980) remarked on the general absence of empirical literature regarding what happened during supervision conferences. Nearly a decade later, Holland (1989a) made a similar observation, although much more urgently phrased: "It is . . . an embarrassment to the field of supervision that the research from the 1960s still offers the best methods for data collection on the conference. Much more and varied research begs to be done" (p. 378). Holland (1989b) implored scholars "to pursue research using methodological and theoretical constructs of discourse analysis to study interactions between supervisors and teachers occurring in the supervisory conference" (p. 381). Responding to Holland, Waite (1995) conducted and encouraged others to conduct research that employed "an ethnographic or anthropological perspective" that could "aid in a re-examination of the assumptions and taken-for-granted nature of the practice of supervision" (p. 11).

Since the mid-1990s, interest in ethnographic and discourse analytical research on supervision has ebbed and flowed, but a truly robust body of literature has not yet emerged. The supervisory conference remains one of the many so-called "black boxes" in education. It is incumbent on researchers to get inside the box with teachers and supervisors and examine how they interact, the meanings each draws from these interactions, and how teachers act, or fail to act, on those meanings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to reveal what occurred during postobservation conferences and to determine what meanings the participants constructed from these occurrences. Supervision is a potentially powerful source of pedagogical, intellectual, and professional growth for teachers. For such growth to occur, however, supervisors must use the clinical cycle effectively. Up to this point, the educational community has simply assumed that

effective supervisory behavior was taking place. This study sought to provide evidence that this was—or was not—so.

To accomplish this purpose, postobservation conferences were audio-recorded. The participants were then interviewed individually to garner their perspectives on what took place during the conference, the relative importance of the various topics discussed, and what they anticipated their next steps would be as a result of these conversations. A convenience sample of seven teacher-supervisor dyads and one triad from a suburban Chicago high school was selected.

Research Questions

Given the paucity of literature in this area, this study was primarily descriptive in nature (Patton, 2002). The study sought to answer the following questions:

1) What occurs during a postobservation conference between a teacher and supervisor?
2) What meanings and understandings does each participant construct from these conferences?
3) What factors may account for any disparities between participants in meanings and understandings?

Conceptual Frameworks

When individuals engage in conversation, it is generally accepted that whatever the speaker says is what the listener hears. Postobservation conferences are, at least superficially, conversations during which the speakers attempt to relay to each other their beliefs about what took place during the observed lesson and how these actions might be improved in the future. It seems reasonable to begin an investigation of whether these conversations lead to the desired results by examining how individuals construct meaning from text, that it, the speech of the participants and the context in which the speech takes place. Therefore, it is also desirable that

the study examine how speech is enacted, particularly speech that may entail criticism. To that end, this study has been informed by hermeneutics, conversation and discourse analysis, and politeness theory.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation of meaning. Philosophical hermeneutics recognizes that there is a space between the reader and the text in which meaning is created. Readers understand a text only through the context created by their histories and biases (Smith, 1993). Thus, "accuracy" of interpretation is context-dependent and ever-changing. Philosophical hermeneutics rejects the idea of truth as an absolute and unchanging entity (Freeman, 2008; Smith, 1993). Instead, understanding is a process that continues indefinitely. One does not arrive *at* the truth; one journeys *toward* it.

Analytics of Interpretive Practice: Conversation and Discourse Analysis

To examine the efficacy of the postobservation conference, which is effected through conversational interaction, a combination of conversation analysis (CA) and discourse analysis (DA) was used. CA studies how talk is structured to determine how human beings maintain conversational order, examining the minute details of talk-in-interaction: pauses, prosody, simultaneity or contiguity of speech, other sounds generated by the speaker, and non-speech elements, such as gestures or posture (Liddicoat, 2007). DA employs a wider angled lens to explore how language interacts with other elements, such as personal values or environmental and historical realities(Gee, Michaels, & O'Connor, 1992). To benefit from both the micro-analysis of CA and the broader view provided by DA, Gubrium and Holstein (2000) recommended a combination of the two, which they termed an "analytics of interpretive practice." In such an analytics, CA and DA remain apart from each other, but the researcher

moves continually between the two, examining what meanings are being created and how they are being created.

Politeness Theory

An offshoot of CA and DA, politeness theory, was also used. Politeness theory seeks to explain and predict how people go about protecting their self-image and the self-image of the person with whom they are speaking (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967). This self-image is called "face." Any action that puts either the speaker"s or the hearer"s face at risk is deemed a face-threatening act (FTA). Supervisors who have to perform an FTA usually use some form of politeness strategy, also called a redressive action, "to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA . . . [and] indicate clearly that no such face threat is intended or desired" (Brown & Levinson, 1979, pp. 69-70).

Overview of the Method

Eight postobservation conferences were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to multiple rounds of analysis. The first analysis occurred during transcription at which time areas were noted where misunderstanding or misinterpretation seemed likely. These areas of possible misinterpretation were also turned into audio clips for use during later interviews with the participants. Several audio clips representing negative cases, speech that the researcher interpreted as fairly clear and unlikely to lead to misunderstanding, were also created. Individual participants were interviewed regarding their overall impressions of the conferences. They were then asked to listen to and comment on audio clips. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and a detailed summary sent to each participant for their feedback. These interviews were also coded inductively. Where discrepancies were found between participants" understanding of events, the initial conference recordings and transcripts were mined for

interactions that may have contributed to this misinterpretation. Each subsequent sequence of 1) conference 2) teacher interview 3) supervisor interview sequence enabled further refinement of emerging hypotheses regarding meaning making and misapprehension.

Significance of the Study

Better teaching happens one instructional decision at a time, based on continual improvement of practice, made possible by an atmosphere that insists that teachers work collegially "exploring, refining, and improving their practice" (Fullan, 2007, p. 55). The fact that collegiality and continual professional growth remain the exception in many schools (Elmore, 2004) may indicate that clinical supervision is not being used appropriately. Alternatively, this absence of professional growth may indicate that, despite its appropriate use, clinical supervision is not an effective tool for changing teaching behaviors. This study sought first to uncover what takes place during a postobservation conference. Having established what occurs, the researcher then analyzed how these behaviors were interpreted by the participants and provided possible explanations for these interpretations. It is this component of the study that has the greatest potential to reveal how supervisors and teachers may work together more productively.

In addition, this study has the potential to invigorate the research agenda within the field of educational administration and instructional supervision. Currently, many of the conversation analytical studies of supervision are being conducted by language scholars (e.g., Hayashi, 1996; Vásquez, 2004). The questions asked in such studies concern how conversations are constructed but rarely go on to examine what meanings the participants make of the conversations or how they act on what was discussed. Cogan (1973) urged that "clinical supervision should be studied . . . in the full multidimensionality of human interaction" (p. 58). Holland (1989a) noted the need for a body of supervision literature that uses "discourse analysis to explore the interpretive

aspects of the supervisory conference" affording "a new understanding of a dimension of conferencing often cited in the theoretical literature but as yet not researched in any thorough, systematic way" (Holland, 1989a, p. 378). Only a small number of education scholars have responded to Holland's (1989b) call. This study may serve to reignite interest in conversation and discourse analytical studies about teachers and supervisors.

Assumptions

One of the assumptions of this research was that neither teachers nor supervisors drew much distinction between supervision and evaluation, looking on all official teacher-supervisor interactions as evaluative (Dungan, 1993). An additional assumption was that the information provided by some of the participants was less than completely forthright. Participants did not lie, but some presented versions of the truth that better represented how they wished things to be than how they were (Agrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000).

Definition of Terms

Analytics of interpretive practice— Alternate use of both conversation analysis and discourse analysis to determine both meaning and how meaning is constructed through linguistic and paralinguistic means (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

Clinical supervision— Also called the clinical cycle or observation cycle. Minimally, this involves three interactions: a preobservation conference, the observation, and a postobservation conference. Supervision of this kind is formative, intended to yield continual improvement (Cogan, 1973).

Conversation analysis— The study of "the organization and orderliness of . . . real-world, situated, contextualized talk" (Liddicoat, 2007, pp. 6-8).

Discourse analysis— The study of how conversation and context interact to form meanings (Francis & Hester, 2004).

Evaluation— Often used interchangeably with supervision, evaluations "are summative; classroom observations and other assessments of professional performance lead to a final judgment" (Zepeda, 2007, p. 29). Clinical supervision at the study's site was also evaluative. Therefore, although the term "supervision" is employed throughout this document, "evaluation" is also implied.

Face— Goffman (1967) defines this as "an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (p. 5). Individuals are "in face" or "maintaining face" when the image they have of themselves is consistent with others' judgments of them.

Face threatening act (FTA)—Any behavior, usually a speech act, that threatens either an individual's desire to be unimpeded (negative face) or to be appreciated and valued (positive face) (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

Hedging— Use of words or phrases that "make one's own opinion safely vague" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 116). Some of the most common hedges are "sort of," "in a way," "like," and "kind of."

Politeness strategy (also called a redressive action) — Refers to any of a number of behaviors intended to downplay the effect of a face threatening act or demonstrate that no such act is unintended (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

Politeness theory— A framework for analyzing human interaction that seeks to explain and predict the strategies individuals use to protect their "face" and the faces of those with whom they interact (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967).

Postobservation conference— In the clinical observation cycle, this conference follows the observation of a teacher and, ideally, allows the teacher and supervisor to collaborate in planning through analysis of data culled from the observation (e.g., Cogan, 1973; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007).

Pseudo-agreement— The phrasing of expressions to indicate an implicit agreement that may not necessarily have been made, e.g., "So we're on for tonight, then." (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

Redressive action— See politeness strategy.

Supervisor— Any individual charged with the supervision of a teacher's performance. Most typically, this role will be filled by someone in an administrative position, but that is not always the case.

Strengths and Limitations

The primary value of the study is the inclusion of extensive passages of dialogue between teachers and supervisors followed by detailed analysis of this speech. Readers can not only to evaluate the researcher's analysis but also draw their own conclusions.

Despite these advantages, the study is limited by several factors. The size of the sample makes any conclusions drawn from the study provisional. Additionally, small samples benefit from homogeneity, but, because no selection criteria were instituted other than all teachers must be currently practicing, the sample is not optimally homogenous (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) .

Data were collected over a fairly short period of time. In particular, the 17 one-on-one interviews were performed in a single week. As a result, no single interview was transcribed or analyzed before another was conducted, limiting the ability to follow up in person on themes that

revealed themselves following time in the field. Furthermore, despite the speed with which the interviews were conducted, the delay between the conferences and some of the interviews was considerable, negatively affecting the memories of the participants.

The researcher experienced a small amount of personal bias in favor of one of her participants, a first-year teacher who admitted during their interview that she had recently been fired. Quite a few excerpts from her conference have been provided, allowing the reader to evaluate whether the researcher‟s personal feelings clouded her judgment.

Some participants expressed a belief that the presence of recording equipment affected the data. Two mentioned feeling "awkward," and another admitted to changing her behavior because she did not wish to be recorded acting in a fashion she believed unseemly. This same participant asserted that her supervisor behaved more professionally than usual because the conference was being recorded.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 presented the political and pedagogical background of the study. It further outlined the study‟s rationale, including the guiding research questions. The researcher then provided an overview of the conceptual frameworks, both epistemological and substantive, and the research methods used. The significance of the study was then explained, followed by definitions of potentially ambiguous or unusual terms. Finally, the researcher laid out the study‟s limitations.

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature, divided into three sections. The first section examines schools as organizations, providing a context for the difficulties faced by educators and education reformers. The second section details the historical and pedagogical underpinnings of teacher supervision with special emphasis on the clinical supervision model.

The final portion comprises the methods and findings from empirical studies of postobservation conferences.

Chapter 3 explicates the research methods used, including how the study was conducted and the justifications for all methodological choices. Chapter 4 reports the study findings. Chapter 5 discusses implications and recommendations from the findings, grounding this discussion in the theoretical and practical literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The clinical observation cycle was originally conceptualized to foster professional growth in teachers, but, if the cycle is conducted inappropriately or ritualistically, it may have limited efficacy. The purpose of this study was to examine postobservation supervisory conferences in an effort to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1. In so doing, this study sought to build on the existing research in teacher supervision and evaluation.

Three areas of literature were investigated. To provide a context, the first area of study was the U.S. public school as an organization. The manner in which U.S. educational institutions evolved has created systemic barriers to teachers‟ professional growth. Identifying these obstacles and the system that sustains them was necessary to understand the need for and potential limitations of clinical supervision. The second section of this chapter explicates the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the clinical supervision model. Finally, although there is a wealth of literature on instructional supervision, numerous researchers (Blumberg, 1980; Holland, 1989a, 1989b; Waite, 1995) have criticized the absence of empirical studies, particularly those that employ qualitative methodology. Therefore, the final portion of this chapter reviews literature that examined conference discourse. This section was further subdivided into foundational literature, literature emerging from fields other than educational administration, and, finally, supervision-specific literature.

Schools as Organizations

Writing nearly a century ago, Waller (1932/1961) offered the following description of school culture:

> There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them. There are games, which are sublimated wars, teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning them. There are traditions, and traditionalists waging their world-old battle against innovators. There are laws, and there is the problem of enforcing them. . . . There are specialized societies with a rigid structure and a limited membership. (p. 103)

Although intended to describe the interactions of children, Waller's (1932/1961) words remain fairly accurate representations of teacher culture as well. Waller noted the "marked tendency for [teacher] groups to turn into conflict groups . . . schismatic and conspirital [sic] groups, congenial groups, and cliques centering around different personalities" (p. 12).

Elmore (2004) made a damning indictment of schools when he claimed, "It would be difficult to invent a more dysfunctional organization for a performance-based accountability system. In fact, the existing structure and culture of schools seems better designed to resist learning and improvement than to enable it" (p. 92). As currently organized, most schools "reinforce isolated work and problem-solving" (Elmore, 2004, p. 109). This arrangement stands in stark contrast to other professions wherein practitioners submit to the norms and sanctions of a governing body that limits their autonomy but helps them maintain professional standards (Fullan, 2007).

The legacy of the one-room schoolhouse

This dysfunctional culture has its genesis in the one-room schoolhouse (Lortie, 1975; Tye, 2000). Not to acknowledge its legacy "would be comparable to talking about issues in Western democracies without acknowledging the Magna Carta" (Glickman et al., 2005, p. 16). The teacher of a one-room school was a solitary figure, "perform[ing] his [sic] schoolhouse

duties single-handedly" (Lortie, 1975, p. 3) with only occasional visits by community officials to evaluate the quality of student learning. As communities grew in size, the one-room schoolhouse was simply replicated multiple times under a single roof. Lortie (1975) used the metaphor of an egg-crate to describe this arrangement that did very little to diminish the isolation in which teachers worked. The egg-crate remains the norm (Elmore, 2004; Tye, 2000) and "has produced important consequences for teaching; it is itself connected with high turnover, habits of curricular thinking, and the commitments of those drawn into teaching" (Lortie, 1975, p. 23).

The egg-crate arrangement "severely limit[s teachers'] exposure to other adults doing the same work" (Elmore, 2004, p. 92). Teachers are not "expected to subject their practice to the scrutiny of peers" (Elmore, 2004, p. 91). In fact, the systemic isolation in which teachers work has made the presence of other educators anathema, and "as a result, the entrance of adults into a classroom too often provokes a teacher's anxiety and resistance" (Cogan, 1973, p. 23). Such isolation limits both the opportunities for feedback about current practice as well as "cross pollination" of ideas and the garnering of new practices. Teachers succumb to "'secondary ignorance'—when you don't know what you don't know" (Tye, 2000, p. 143), becoming, instead, "solo practitioners inventing practice out of their personalities" (Elmore, 2004, p. 31).

Some teachers manage to thrive despite their isolation, leading to the commonly held perception that "inspired and demanding teaching [is] an individual trait, much like hair color or shoe size, rather than . . . a professional norm" (Elmore, 2004, p. 13). If good teaching is innate, teachers and instructional leaders are absolved of the responsibility of making it common practice (Elmore, 2004). Conversely, isolation also allows educators to indulge the chimera that all teachers are equally competent (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2007). Any "[t]eachers who threaten

this pretense [that everyone is equally effective] . . . may have to pay a price in social ostracism" (Elmore, 2004, p. 122).

Faculties may be balkanized by other means. The vast disparity "of entry patterns indicates that teaching is not . . . standardized by professional consensus, nor is its membership carefully screened through shared criteria for admission" (Lortie, 1975, p. 39). Thus the teaching ranks are populated by individuals at the extremes of a continuum: "Some teachers . . . will talk about teaching in glowing terms, as a 'calling' . . . Others will talk about their choice as a compromise with reality's demands" (Lortie, 1975, pp. 38-39). Because each group is made uncomfortable by the other"s conception of the profession, they may find it difficult to communicate with each other and self-segregate or retreat into isolation. Fullan (2007) noted that professional behavior among teachers is essentially a blind loyalty that precludes any interference in or criticism of another teacher"s behavior, even those behaviors that may be harmful to students" learning.

Weick (1978) used the term "loose coupling" to describe the organizational structure of schools. In a loosely coupled system, elements may respond to each other, but each "preserves it own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness" (p. 18). This separation slows the ability of the organization to respond to outside influences and to disseminate innovations within the system. At the same time, "[a] loosely coupled system is more resilient than a bureaucratic system, because by its very nature it can absorb changes without disturbing the organization as a whole" (Tye, 2000, p. 71). Reducing the interdependence between elements allows schools to accommodate high teacher turnover more easily (Lortie, 1975; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). For example, creating effective collaborative teaching teams is time-consuming and expensive (Elmore, 2004; Weick, 1978). If a member of a team leaves, that

member is not easily replaced. By contrast, "if there is a breakdown in one portion of a loosely coupled system then this breakdown is sealed off and does not affect other portions of the organization" (Weick, 1978, p. 23).

A further advantage of loose coupling is the freedom it allows administrators to engage in "the logic of confidence" (Meyer & Rowan, 1983, p. 62). Blumberg (1980) explained, "Rational people . . . design rational systems, and they should work—or so we reason. And so, once having established a structure, we tend to forget about it and assume that it is working" (p. 15). Both Meyer and Rowan (1983) and Tye (2000) took a slightly more cynical view, asserting that the logic of confidence released administrators from the responsibility to find or remedy inconsistencies or incompetence.

There are severe negative consequences to loose coupling. Rosenholtz (1989) examined in considerable detail the effect of shared goals, and their absence, on schools, placing goal-sharing at the "center [of] the mystery of schools'' success, mediocrity, or failure" (p. 13). Without a common understanding of the ends toward which they are striving, "faculties fracture into atoms with entirely separate orbits—as connected pedagogically as commuters waiting briefly in a train station, each bound on a different route" (p. 18). In schools with high goal-consensus, Rosenholtz found that conversation centered on "the substance of teaching" (p. 30), whereas in schools with low to moderate goal consensus, such conversations were rare. Similarly, McLaughlin (1990) found that in "cohesive, highly collegial environments . . . teachers report a high level of innovativeness, high levels of energy and enthusiasm and . . . the focus is on devising strategies that enable all students to prosper" (p. 94). The "substance of teaching," what Elmore (2004) called "the instructional core—the relationships between teachers

and students and the organizational practices that support those relationships" (p. 8), is at the heart of any improvements in teaching behavior or student achievement.

One means by which goals and expectations can be communicated and consensus achieved is through effective use of clinical supervision. In fact, Rosenholtz (1989) found that the second strongest predictor of shared goals was teacher supervision. She explained that supervisors in "self-renewing schools . . . regularly monitor classroom affairs and student learning" (p. 72). In so doing, supervisors help teachers recognize "which way to aim their own improvement efforts" (p. 77).

Clinical supervision represents one of the most effective potential means of "tightening" the coupling between elements in a school. Rather than the implication in loosely coupled institutions "that schools . . . are nothing more than collections of independent teachers, each marching to the step of a different pedagogical drum" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 17), effective supervision should help to engender a strong technical culture, professionalism, and shared goals. If, however, teachers or supervisors view the observation cycle as a ritual, which numerous scholars have suggested (Blumberg, 1980; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998), the coupling will remain loose and the efficacy of the observation cycle may be limited. Similarly, if conferences are conducted in a manner that results in strained relationships between supervisors and teachers (Zepeda, 2007), teachers may resist or offer only the appearance of compliance (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Clinical Supervision

The clinical supervision cycle has several discrete components. Cogan (1973), one of the pioneers in the field, noted eight:

1) establishing the teacher-supervisor relationship;
2) planning with the teacher;

3) planning the strategy of observation;
4) observing instruction;
5) analyzing the teaching-learning processes;
6) planning the strategy of the conference;
7) the conference; and,
8) renewed planning.

Glatthorn‟s (1997) intensive development cycle likewise included eight steps, but, because intensive development was intended only for new teachers and those in need of remediation, Glatthorn‟s formulation placed more responsibility for reflection and analysis in the hands of the supervisor than the teacher.

Glickman et al. (2005) and Goldhammer et al. (1993) listed the same five steps:

1) preobservation conference;
2) observation;
3) analysis;
4) postobservation conference; and,
5) critique of the previous four steps.

Zepeda (2007) noted that Acheson and Gall limited the cycle to three steps: 1) planning conference, 2) observation, and 3) postobservation conference. These three steps constitute the common denominator in all models of clinical supervision. Pajak (1993) cited a single exception, Madeleine Hunter, who cautioned against the bias that a preobservation conference may create. However, Hunter advocated an extensive series of in-service activities that served many of the same purposes.

The progressive reduction of steps in the cycle may correspond to the movement of clinical supervision from its place of origin, Harvard University‟s Master of Arts in Teaching program, to P-12 public educational institutions. Cogan‟s (1973) team at Harvard had the benefit of the protections offered by academia, namely time, as well as some of the most elite pre-service teacher candidates and teacher educators available (National Council on Teacher Quality,

2009). As clinical supervision made its way into the public P-12 arena, instructional leaders required more streamlined processes. Additionally, either leaders or teachers—or both—may have lacked the capacity or willingness to engage in the reflection implicit in the original clinical model (Tye, 2000).

Ideal supervision

Supervision should be a transparent process in which all vested parties know in advance "(1) the reason and purpose for the observation, (2) the focus of the observation, [and] (3) the method and form of the observation to be used" (Glickman et al., 2005, p. 243). Once these components have been agreed upon, "they should not be changed in the middle of the game, except by mutual consent and understanding" (Goldhammer et al., 1993, p. 44).

Preobservation conferences should accomplish several goals. Successful conferences build trust between the teacher and the supervisor (Cogan, 1973; Zepeda, 2007), making all future interactions more productive. Preobservation conferences allow teachers to focus their goals for the upcoming observation (Cogan, 1973; Glatthorn, 1997; Zepeda, 2007). These conferences also allow supervisors to determine a focus for their observations and the criteria thereof (Cogan, 1973; Glatthorn, 1997; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007).

Postobservation conferences provide supervisors and teachers an opportunity to review what happened during the observed lesson (Glickman et al., 2005), make sense of it by "analyzing and reflecting on data" (Zepeda, 2007, p. 173), and plan what changes the teacher will make to future practice (Glatthorn, 1997; Glickman et al, 2005; Goldhammer et al., 1993; Zepeda, 2007). Scholars differ in the amount of responsibility with which they endow either the teacher or the supervisor for analysis of data or for planning conference agendas. Glickman et al. (2005) and Glatthorn (1997) suggested that supervisors complete their analyses prior to meeting

with the teacher. Of course, Glatthorn's (1997) approach was specifically designed to aid those teachers who were either very new to the profession or who required remediation, and Glickman et al. (2005) acknowledged that the level of didacticism employed by the supervisor was dependent on the teacher's developmental stage.

In the original model, Cogan (1973) advocated that both teachers and supervisors analyze the observed lesson but that they do so, initially, in isolation from one another. Although they separated the analysis stage from the conference itself, Goldhammer et al. (1993) urged that "teacher[s be] trained to participate in the teaching analysis" (pp. 45-46). Similarly, Zepeda (2007) strongly recommended that supervisors "engage the teacher in reviewing, analyzing, and reflecting on data" (p. 173). By actively constructing an understanding of their practice, teachers' "chances of benefiting from the enterprise [of clinical supervision] are most favorable" (Goldhammer et al., 1993, p. 46).

Conferences must be data-driven. Cogan (1973) went so far as to suggest that "supervisors need to internalize the standards of evidence and proof that are characteristic of sciences" (p. 19). Glickman et al. (2005) cautioned that, when creating the written analysis of their findings, supervisors "[w]rite down only what has been taken directly from [the] observation" (p. 243).

A number of researchers noted that a focus on the data not only makes for more effective analysis of teaching but also ameliorates some of the defensiveness teachers experience relative to supervision. Rather than a value-laden statement, such as "The transition into small group work was a bit chaotic," Zepeda (2007) recommended simply presenting the data using a gambit such as "Here are the events that led to the small group [work]. . ." (Zepeda, 2007, p. 174). Emotional reactions, both positive and negative, are "more frequent in response to suggestions

than to facts" (Alfonso et al., 1981, p. 167). Thus, a non-judgmental presentation of data should encourage a more dispassionate examination of practice.

Effective conferences focus on teachers' strengths (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer et al., 1993). This is not to suggest that critical weaknesses should be ignored. Cogan (1973) was resolute in his insistence that "serious threats to students' learning should be dealt with as soon as they are observed" (pp. 203-204). He acknowledged, however, that such instances were rare.

Effective supervision attends to the teacher's career development stage (Glatthorn, 1997; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007). Glatthorn's (1997) differentiated supervision delineated between levels of professional attainment, creating something of a caste system within faculties. Depending on the teachers' years of experience and perceived abilities, they were supervised using one of three models: self-directed, cooperative, and intensive development. The teachers identified as most capable were to engage in self-directed development whereby "the teacher . . . sets a growth goal, undertakes actions to accomplish the goal, gets feedback from students, and makes a final assessment of progress" (p. 7).

Teachers deemed highly competent but perhaps not as exemplary as those who used self-directed development participated in cooperative development wherein "small groups of teachers . . . hold professional dialogues, conduct action research, observe and confer with each other, and develop curriculum and learning materials" (p. 7). Finally, non-tenured teachers and tenured teachers with "serious instructional problems" (p. 7) were given intensive development which might involve as many as seven clinical cycles and targeted instructional coaching.

Glatthorn's (1993) rationale for separating the faculty in this manner has merit. He rejected the efficacy of a one-size-fits-all approach to supervision. He also wished to encourage greater collegiality in teaching. Allowing teachers to supervise themselves and each other, he

felt, would encourage the development of a culture of professionalism. Finally, delegating supervisory responsibility to faculty members would free administrators to spend more time and energy on the teachers who truly needed it.

There are some difficulties, however, in Glatthorn‟s (1993) approach. First, the advocacy of self-directed development implies that a truly superlative teacher can sustain excellence without external scrutiny. Schön (1983) drew a distinction between reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice. The former takes place during the act of teaching and may be rushed or prompted by survival instincts while the latter occurs after the fact when cooler heads may prevail but at which time teachers may have forgotten salient details. Reflection-in-practice relies on the teacher‟s current knowledge and past experience and, thus, does not necessarily lead teachers to grow beyond their current professional level. Reflection-on-practice is made more effective by the presence of a third party who can provide additional observation and data. Even champions, as the saying goes, need coaches.

A second potential limitation to Glatthorn‟s (1993) model is that advocating collaborative development presupposes that the conditions for effective collaboration are already in place. Glatthorn briefly warned against what Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) called “contrived collegiality,” the teaming of teachers who still embrace isolationism, but Glatthorn (1993) provided little guidance for achieving genuine collegiality. Certainly, collegiality would not be supported by the segregation of faculty members into those deemed competent enough for self-supervision and those who must be “rescued from ineptitude, saved from incompetence, or supported in [their] stumblings” (Cogan, 1973, p. 21). While a new teacher might not object to intensive development, a tenured teacher would likely find it humiliating.

Glickman et al. (2005) drew on situational leadership theory to develop their concept of developmental supervision. In the developmental model, all teachers engage in the same clinical cycle, but supervisors use more or less controlling styles, depending on the teacher's developmental level. Figure 2.1 is the continuum of supervisory behaviors, ranging from least to most controlling (Glickman et al., 2005).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Listening	*Clarifying*	*Encouraging*	*Reflecting*	*Presenting*	*Problem Solving*	*Negotiating*	*Directing*	*Standardizing*	*Reinforcing*
T									t
s									S
Clusters of behaviors:		Nondirective			Collaborative		Directive Informational		Directive Control
Key:	T= Maximum teacher responsibility t= Minimum teacher responsibility			S=Maximum supervisor responsibility s=Minimum supervisor responsibility					

Figure 2.1 The Supervisory Behavior Continuum (Glickman et al., 2005, pp. 98-99)

Directive control, or what Cogan (1973) called "the didactic strategy," is used primarily when "teachers are functioning at very low developmental levels . . . [or] do not have awareness, knowledge, or inclination to act on an issue" (Glickman et al., 2005, p. 123). While behaviors at the low end of the continuum in Figure 2.1 are used—the style is not intended to be adversarial or autocratic—the supervisor employs more of the high end behaviors, assuming most of the responsibility for the conference and for the teacher's subsequent success or failure.

Glickman et al. (2005) cautioned that directive control should serve only as a last resort when less directive methods have proven ineffective and should not be used indefinitely. Glickman et al.'s implication appears to be that 1) every teacher is capable of transcending the lowest developmental level and 2) this growth will be impeded if supervisors employ directive behaviors for extended periods.

The next phase in the developmental model, directive informational supervision, is appropriate to a teacher with the awareness to recognize a problem but lacking the skill or knowledge to fix (Glickman et al., 2005). The distance between directive informational and

directive control is quite narrow. For example, whereas a supervisor using directive controlling techniques might say, "It is essential that you . . .," the directive informational supervisor might begin the same statement with, "I suggest . . ." (Glickman et al., 2005, pp. 128-129). While supervisors using the directive informational technique still cast themselves in the role of expert and accept most of the responsibility for the outcomes, "the teacher exercises some control in choosing which practice(s) to use" (p. 131).

Collaborative supervisory behaviors are most appropriate for teachers who have approximately the same level of expertise as their supervisors (Glickman et al., 2005). Both parties present their ideas and work toward a mutually satisfying course of action. If a disagreement arises, the supervisor explicitly identifies the points on which they deviate and steers the conversation in the direction of possible solutions. Finally, non-directive supervision is used with high functioning teachers who may possess more knowledge on a given subject than the supervisor. A non-directive supervisor serves primarily as a sounding board for teachers, reflecting back to them their concerns and allowing them to work through solutions on their own.

Obstacles to ideal clinical supervision

Contextual factors affect the success of the clinical cycle. Supervisors and teachers who lack individual self-awareness or supervisors who have yet to resolve feelings of role conflict and role ambiguity may enact less-than-ideal conferences. Similarly, supervisors may feel more bound to protect than critique highly sensitive teachers. Some supervisors may reduce the complexity of the supervision process, either because doing so is expedient or because they do not fully appreciate the process"s complexity.

Individual self-awareness

One of the potential impediments to ideal conference behavior is a lack of self-awareness on the part of the teacher, the supervisor, or both (Cogan, 1973; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007). Cogan (1973) focused his concern on the supervisor‟s blind spots, remarking that

> the interpretations [the supervisor] puts upon what he [sic] perceives all depend not only upon what "actually" happened but also upon his own past experiences . . . [and] may vary . . . with the different personal states he experiences. (Cogan, 1973, p. 36)

The ability of the supervisor to make effective choices is dependent first on the recognition of "patterns of perception," then by the "use he [sic] makes of this self-knowledge in forming judgments and controlling his professional behavior" (Cogan, 1973, p. 34).

Glickman et al. (2005) advised that supervisors needed to discover whether the way they perceived their own behavior was consistent with how others perceived it. Supervisors who believe they are using a collaborative or non-directive approach may actually be considered controlling or manipulative by others. For example, supervisors who attempt to lead teachers through a series of questions to evoke a "correct" response may believe this process yields more lasting understanding than a direct approach. Teachers, on the other hand, have characterized it as forcing them "to play blindman's buff [sic] to find [the „right‟ answer]. It is more damaging than outright criticism" (Cogan, 1973, p. 215).

Role conflict and ambiguity

Another barrier to ideal supervision conferences is the absence in the supervisory literature of an agreed-upon role for the supervisor (Cogan, 1973; Pajak, 1993) or organizational policies that force supervisors into multiple roles that should be mutually exclusive. These conditions can produce tremendous role conflict and role ambiguity (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Mitchell, 1990; Kahn & Wolfe, 1964; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Role conflict occurs

"when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent" (Rizzo et al., 1970, p. 151) or of such a nature that "compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult" (Bacharach et al., 1990, p. 417). Role ambiguity is defined, in part, as the absence of "clarity of behavioral requirements . . . which would serve to guide behavior and provide knowledge that the behavior is appropriate" (Rizzo et al., 1970, pp. 155-156).

Role conflict and role ambiguity which, together, create role stress (Bacharach et al., 1990) have numerous detrimental effects both on employees and organizations. Rizzo et al. (1970) explained that employees without a clear idea of their job's parameters "will hesitate to make decisions and will have to rely on a trial and error approach" (p. 151). Employees may also resort to "defense mechanisms which distort the reality of the situation" (p. 151) or coping strategies focused predominantly on avoidance of the sources of stress (Rizzo et al., 1970). Kahn and Wolfe (1964) asserted that "strong role pressure is expensive to an organization in terms of the morale of the role performer" (p. 119). Employees suffering high role stress experience higher tension, lower job satisfaction, and lower confidence in the organization than those who experience lower levels (Kahn & Wolfe, 1964). Role ambiguity has also been correlated with increased levels of "anxiety, fear and hostility . . . and loss of self-confidence, often with lower productivity" (Rizzo et al., 1970, p. 154). Under experimental conditions, groups subjected to high levels of role ambiguity had reduced problem-solving abilities, in addition to the already noted effects of increased hostility and reduced satisfaction (Rizzo et al., 1970).

The literature offers a broad range of supervisor behaviors that may or may not be appropriate with any particular teacher. The supervisor may engage the teacher in a "superior-subordinate relationship" (Cogan, 1973, p. 59), although Cogan dismissed this tack as destructive because it "cast[s the teacher] in the character of an inferior" (p. 59) and absolves the teacher of

responsibility, thereby “erod[ing her] sense of professional accountability” (p. 59). By contrast, Alfonso et al. (1981) noted that “highly accurate authoritarian leaders were most successful, while . . . democratic leaders . . . produced moderate degrees of goal accomplishment that appeared to be independent of the leader's accuracy” (p. 101). Similarly, Roberts (1990) explained two of the necessary conditions for acting on a request were that the supervisor was in a position of authority over the teacher and that the teacher felt a sense of obligation to perform the requested behavior. Cogan (1973) offered a compromise: “leadership without dominance" (p. 69). Such a conception allowed supervisors to supervise but enjoined them from being autocratic or tyrannical. At the same time, Cogan did not provide instruction as to how a supervisor might achieve leadership without dominance.

The relationship between the two individuals may be conceptualized as that of teacher and student (Cogan, 1973; Mosher & Purpel, 1972). Cogan (1973) denied the legitimacy of this relationship for many of the same reasons that he eschewed the superior-subordinate relationship. By contrast, Alfonso et al. (1981) explained that teachers who are unsure of their abilities and need strong guidance will communicate “more frequent[ly] and in greater amount with a peer whose expertise is accepted as superior” (p. 178).

Zepeda (2007) viewed the supervisor as a facilitator who allows “[t]he teacher's point of view [to] permeate the discussion” (p. 173). Similarly, Pajak (1993) offered the possibility of a consultant-client relationship whereby “the initiative remains with the client, who can freely accept or reject the consultant‟s recommendations” (p. 129). Given that compliance with supervisor recommendations is often the nucleus around which decisions to retain or release a teacher are made, it seems naïve to suggest that teachers are free to reject these recommendations.

Another facet of role ambiguity is the absence of an agreed-upon protocol within the profession for “good” supervision. Conferences must be responsive to the individual needs of teachers and students; therefore, “[i]t follows, then, that there are no standard formats and no best strategies” (Cogan, 1973, p. 197). Blumberg (1980) cautioned that an effective supervisor employs whatever behavior will help perpetuate the inquiry process, “whether . . . the behavior in question involve[s] . . . nondirective response, a pointed question, information giving, demonstrating, or what have you” (p. 5). Likewise Alfonso et al. (1981) explained that the most effective leaders demonstrate "consideration of the needs of followers, while also insisting on discipline and emphasizing task achievement" (p. 103). Finally, Cogan (1973) urged “the clinical supervisor . . . to exhibit both person-oriented and task-oriented behavior in an integrated fashion” (p. 50).

Reductionism. Such seemingly conflicting responsibilities chafe administrators who, for purposes of expediency, may seek to divest the work of schools of its complexity and replace it with "tidy framework[s]" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 93) and “cookie cutter sameness” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 107). Other supervisors, who may lack competence, reduce programs to what they understand, ignoring the rest. Below, a school principal explained his supervisory practice: "I show up whenever I want to. I walk in at whatever part of the lesson. I sit down and I take what's called a 'modified verbatim'. I was trained in Madeline Hunter" (Waite, 1995, p. 16). With the exception of the use of modified verbatim, this supervisor‟s description bears little resemblance to the process advocated by Hunter and may be the result of misinterpreting Hunter‟s reasons for foregoing the preobservation conference.

Fence-sitting. Given their tremendous role stress, supervisors may attempt to avoid committing fully to any particular role. As a result, their ability to communicate may suffer.

Cogan (1973) explained that teachers need reassurance before they can assimilate criticism. Thus, following a classroom observation, a supervisor may offer such reassurance with an off-hand remark like "Good job," or "Well done." Though seemingly trivial,

> [w]hat happens if the teacher believes the supervisor? Or what if the teacher knows that the lesson was bad, and concludes that the supervisor is an incompetent and really cannot tell good teaching from poor teaching? Or if he concludes that the supervisor is a hypocrite? (Cogan, 1973, p. 206)

The supervisor must constantly negotiate the tensions between complete candor and compassion.

Teacher sensitivity. These tensions are compounded by the egg-crate organization of schools, noted earlier, that renders some teachers highly defensive to perceived threats to their autonomy. Abraham Flexner noted this phenomenon as early as the 1920s when he remarked,

> There is something queer about the genus of "educator"; the loftiest are not immune. I think the cause must lie in their isolation from the rough and tumble contacts with all manner of men. They lost their sense of reality. (quoted in Elmore, 2004, p. 19).

Teachers presented with a version of themselves that does not fit the version they have constructed internally tend "to 'filter out' criticisms from a supervisor, feeling that there is really no sound reason to question [their] work" (Alfonso et al., 1981, p. 163).

The supervision literature is filled with warnings against "threaten[ing] the teacher's sense of his [sic] own dignity or human worth" (Cogan, 1973, p. 25) and admonishments to "[a]void . . . techniques which were unsettling to the teacher in the past, or are likely to be disquieting at the moment" (Goldhammer et al., 1993, p. 79). Goldhammer et al. recommended not "rais[ing] questions, offer[ing] criticisms, or mak[ing] suggestions that are likely to undermine the teacher"s security or strategy for the lesson at hand" (p. 79). Cogan (1973), likewise, insisted that "the analysis of a teacher"s classroom behavior stops when the implications of such analysis seem likely to threaten the teacher's security" (p. 25). Given these injunctions, a supervisor may find it difficult to say anything meaningful. Some researchers who

have examined the postobservation conference in detail have found this is indeed the case. This review turns now to an examination of these studies.

Empirical Studies of Postobservation Conferences

While there is much literature on supervision and postobservation conferences, very little of it uses the conference itself as a primary data source. Initially, the search for literature was narrowed to studies that used conference audio and that took place in U.S. P-12 public schools with in-service teachers. Delimiting the study in this way, however, yielded very few publications, so the search parameters were expanded to include international studies, pre-service teachers, university teaching assistants, and their respective supervisors. This decision was justified on the grounds that, while the substance of the conferences differed considerably, the tensions that supervisors must negotiate between providing honest feedback and demonstrating sensitivity to those they supervise were similar. How the individuals in each conference gave and made sense of feedback was of greater importance than the exact nature of the feedback itself. By expanding the search parameters, a greater number of articles became available. However, this search also revealed how desperate the need was for discourse analytical and other qualitative literature in the field of instructional supervision.

The final portion of this chapter is organized as follows. First, foundational literature is addressed. These studies provide a useful vocabulary for discussing conference behaviors and structure. They also reveal some of the weaknesses of applying quantitative methodology to qualitative data, thus bolstering the case for qualitative methods to study supervision. Following the foundational literature are studies that reveal the fundamental differences between linguistic or pre-service teacher preparation scholarship and in-service teacher supervision scholarship. This section furthers the argument for why discourse analytic studies must be conducted by

supervision scholars. Finally, studies written by supervision scholars are addressed with special attention paid to how these studies leave unanswered the questions posed by the current study.

Foundational Literature in Supervision Scholarship

The earliest research into clinical supervision emerged at a time when social scientists were still overwhelmingly employing the methods of their peers in the natural sciences. Because "human behavior is never static" (Merriam, 2002, p. 27; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 35), techniques appropriate to the natural sciences may be inappropriate and lead to erroneous conclusions in qualitative research. For these reasons, much of the early research that Holland (1989a, 1989b) cited as exemplary in its methodology is of limited use to current supervision scholars. This is not to imply they lack value. If they do nothing else, they provide a historical context, allowing a 21st century supervision scholar to see where he or she falls in the research trajectory. More importantly, early scholars (Blumberg & Cusick, 1970; Kyte, 1962, 1971; Zeichner & Liston, 1985) developed useful vocabulary for discussing conference behaviors and structure. Their works also demonstrate in high relief the necessity for including excerpts from conference transcripts.

The earliest available study that examined audio-recorded conferences was conducted by Kyte (1962). His research team analyzed 90 verbatim transcripts, but the publication contained not a single word of dialogue from any of them. Instead, the conferences were coded for the number of issues addressed, the relative import each issue was given, and when in the conference they occurred. The "effectiveness" of a conference was established by comparing the relative "improvement" of classes that took place before and after the conference.

By cross referencing conference structures with lessons that raters assessed as improved, Kyte (1962) put forth several recommendations for "effective" conferences, including:

- The conference should not include more than four or five items.
- The first item in the conference should be planned to establish rapport and consequently should be given only minor stress or passing mention.
- The second and third items in the conference should be given major stress. If there is any difference . . . the third item should receive the greater stress . . .
- The last point in the conference should . . . have a pleasing effect on the teacher irrespective of its influence on subsequent teaching. (Kyte, 1962, p. 168)

There is little to disagree with in Kyte‟s (1962) recommendations, although he did not operationalize many of his terms, leaving the reader to determine what constitutes, for example, "major stress."

The difficulties presented by Kyte‟s (1962) failure to operationalize these terms become evident in a later publication (Kyte, 1971) in which he presented an annotated version of a conference he considered exemplary. Able to refer to the text of the conference, the reader could independently evaluate Kyte‟s (1962, 1971) findings. In the following excerpt, Kyte (1971) asserted that the supervisor "suggests field trips as a source of information. Introduces this aspect to give it *marked stress*" (p. 23, emphasis in original):

> S: Have you thought of any—what‟s the word I mean—ah, field trips in connection with the study of products or have you gone that far in your planning?
> T: No, I haven‟t . . .
> S: That would be interesting.
> T: Possibly we might arrange that.
> S: That‟s fine. (p. 23)

The stress may be more apparent in the original audio-recording, but, in the absence of any evidence, Kyte‟s (1971) assertion of "marked stress" seems highly subjective. This subjectivity, one of the many challenges of analyzing qualitative data, is possibly the strongest argument for including extensive portions of conference transcripts. At the very least, their inclusion provides the transparency necessary to establish or reject transferability to other contexts.

Reavis‟s (1977) study also emerged at a time when qualitative research was still relying on quantitative methodologies. In this quasi-experimental design, Reavis enlisted nine supervisors from both elementary and secondary schools who were trained to use clinical supervision. Each supervised two teachers. One teacher, the control subject, received the traditional model of supervision. A second, experimental teacher was supervised using the clinical model. Statistically significant positive differences were discovered in several categories for supervisors using the experimental (clinical) design. Likewise, teachers in the experimental group had more positive opinions of their supervisors‟ communication style. Based on his findings, Reavis (1977) suggested that clinical supervision had a positive effect on student achievement. Such a statement reflects a number of the dangers of co-opting the tools of the "hard" sciences for the human sciences.

Reavis (1977) exercised the option of experimental science to discard data that did not conform to the study conditions. The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of clinical supervision compared to traditional supervision, so two supervisors were eliminated from the study because they did not follow the clinical protocol. This finding, that supervisors who knew they were being observed failed to adjust their conference behaviors, was tremendously significant as it represented the first research-based indication that the logic of confidence may not be appropriately applied to instructional supervision. A logical system may have been put in place, but that did not necessarily mean that people were using it. Reavis‟s only concession to this qualitative limitation was his suggestion that supervisor training be more carefully undertaken and monitored.

Contemporaries of Kyte (1962, 1971) and Reavis (1977), Blumberg and Cusick (1970) sought to create a "systematic and quantifiable method" for describing "the nature of the

interaction that takes place between a supervisor . . . and a teacher" (p. 2). The authors developed 15 categories for describing these interactions (Table 2.1). Fifty conferences were audited and, every three seconds, researchers noted what category of interaction was taking place. A tally of these interactions was transferred to a 15x15 matrix.

Blumberg and Cusick (1970) used two analytic approaches to their data. The first involved creating ratios of totals in related categories, such as positive versus negative social-emotional behaviors or the amount of teacher talk versus supervisor talk. Blumberg and Cusick termed the second approach "area analysis" (p. 8). The matrix was divided into areas, each of which was characteristic of certain interactional approaches, such as an emphasis on "building and maintaining relationships" or "controlling the teacher's behavior" (p. 9). In this manner, the researchers were able to provide a graphic analysis of the conference.

Blumberg and Cusick's (1970) study enabled researchers to demonstrate visibly to supervisors and teachers "the flexibility of [their] behavior" and provide "some understanding of the relative typicality of [their] use of self" (p. 10). A tool that can enhance the accuracy of conference participants' self-perception has great value given that one of the potential impediments to ideal conference behavior is a lack of self-awareness (Cogan, 1973; Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007). Not surprisingly, however, widespread use of Blumberg and Cusick's (1970) matrix never materialized. Few researchers and fewer practitioners had the necessary time or skill to analyze even a single conference in this manner. Furthermore, like Kyte (1962), Blumberg and Cusick (1970) provided no examples of the speech acts they categorized, leaving the reader to guess at the differences between, for instance, Category 8—"Gives opinions"—and Category 10—"Criticism." On the other hand, Blumberg and Cusick's (1970) taxonomy of

conference discourse types made possible Zeichner and Liston‟s (1985) examination of conference discourse.

Table 2.1

Teacher-Supervisor Interactions

Category		Description or Function
Supervisor Behaviors		
1	Support-inducing Communications Behavior	• Build a „healthy‟ climate; • Release tension
2	Praise	• Impose a positive value judgment on teacher‟s actions;
3	Accepts or uses teacher‟s ideas	• Clarification, addition to, or development of teacher‟s ideas;
4	Asks for information	• Factual, not opinion-oriented
5	Giving information	• Factual, not opinion-oriented
6	Asks for opinions	• Requests that "the teacher analyze or evaluate something that has occurred"
7	Asks for suggestions	• Requests that the teacher "think about ways of doing things or ways in which things might have been done differently . . . [or] ways in which the supervisor and teacher might work together" (p. 6)
8	Gives opinions	• The opposite of Category 6
9	Gives suggestions	• The opposite of Category 7
10	Criticism	• Negative value judgments • Any supervisor behavior "that can be interpreted as defensive, aggressive, or tension-producing
Teacher Behaviors		
11	Asks for information, opinions, or suggestions	• See categories 4, 6, and 7
12	Gives information, opinions, or suggestions	• See categories 5, 8, and 9
13	Positive social emotional behavior	• Not task-oriented • Helps build relationship • Conveys agreement, not merely compliance
14	Negative social emotional behavior	• Disruptive of the relationship; • Produces tension • Conveys defensiveness, imposed compliance, or rationalization
15	Silence or confusion	• Both or neither party is speaking

(Adapted from Blumberg and Cusick, 1970, pp. 6-7)

From the transcripts of 14 audio-recorded conferences between student-teachers and university supervisors, Zeichner and Liston (1985) created a typology of discourse, dividing it into two major categories: Theoretic Reasoning and Practical Reasoning. The former is a search for knowledge claims while the latter entails answering questions about "what to do" (Zeichner & Liston, 1985, p. 162). Supervisory discourse is dominated by practical reasoning.

Table 2.2
Categories and sub-categories of Practical Reasoning

Factual Discourse	Prudential Discourse	Justificatory Discourse	Critical Discourse
Descriptive	Instructions	Pragmatic rationale	Pragmatic rationale
Informational	Advice/opinion	Intrinsic rationale	Intrinsic rationale
Hermeneutic	Evaluation	Extrinsic rationale	Extrinsic rationale
Explanatory	Support		Hidden curriculum

Under Practical Reasoning are four sub-categories: Factual, Prudential, Justificatory, and Critical Discourse. Zeichner and Liston (1985) described these four major categories as follows:

> *Factual Discourse* is concerned with what has occurred . . . or what will occur in the future . . . *Prudential Discourse* revolves around suggestions about what to do or around evaluations of what has been accomplished . . . *Justificatory Discourse* focuses on the reasons employed when answering the question . . . "Why do this rather than that?" . . . [and] *Critical Discourse* examines and assesses the . . . justification of pedagogical actions or assesses the values and assumptions embedded in the form and content of curriculum and instructional practices. (p. 162, emphasis in the original)

In turn, each of the above categories had multiple sub-categories.

Zeichner and Liston (1985) found that the conferences they studied overwhelmingly employed factual-informational discourse, a circumstance the authors attributed to the fact that university supervisors were generally lacking knowledge of the day-to-day goings-on in their student-teachers" field placements. Because in-service teachers and their supervisors work in closer, more frequent contact, one would not expect to find the same distribution of discourse types in conferences between practicing teachers and their instructional supervisors. This

expectation points to a need for studies, such as the current one, that focus specifically on the supervision of currently practicing teachers. The typology, however, is a useful heuristic device for researchers attempting to name and evaluate conference behaviors.

Research by scholars outside of educational administration

Conversation and discourse analysis by scholars outside the discipline of educational administration has focused less on the conference as a means of improving instruction than on how the discourse itself is accomplished. Hayashi (1996) examined supervisors‟ treatment of dispreferred responses. In a typical conversation, certain responses are "preferred" over others. An invitation, for example, "prefers" an acceptance. One may accept an invitation with no explanation. Refusal of the invitation, by contrast, entails an obligation either to provide a reason for the refusal or to offer an alternative: I can‟t tonight but how „bout next week? (Liddicoat, 2007). Hayashi‟s (1996) interest was with the dispreferred message of refusal. Hayashi found that supervisors tended to construct refusals over a series of turns at talk, rather than as single utterances. The supervisor used a progression of pseudo-agreements, questions, and clarifiers to allow the teacher to arrive at a negative response to his or her own question, obviating the need for the supervisor to issue the refusal. This process is demonstrated in the following excerpt:

> Supervisor (S): If you had a lesson in class that bombed . . . what might be the main consideration for the next day‟s lesson?
>
> Teacher (T): To take the same topic.
>
> S: To take the same topic. You think that would be the most important consideration. . . . Now think of what you just said. The lesson just bombed.
>
> T: Yea. But the material still has to be covered.
>
> S: . . . I understand what you‟re saying, but I‟m trying to get you to realize something here . . . What do you think [the students‟] reaction is going to be?
>
> T: "Oh! No!"

S: . . . which means you‟re likely to have two “bombs in a row. And, would that mean you still wouldn‟t have accomplished what you set out to accomplish? (Hayashi, 1996, pp. 239-240)

Hayashi‟s (1996) work emerged from the field of linguistics, not educational leadership. Consequently, the instructional value of this supervisor‟s approach to feedback was outside the scope of the study. As noted earlier, Cogan (1973) found that many teachers described the technique used in the above excerpt as manipulative and, therefore, counterproductive. In Hayashi‟s (1996) study, however, the teacher‟s interpretation of the supervisor‟s behavior or of the conference itself was not examined. Such an examination would be appropriate to supervision scholarship and is one of the purposes of the current study.

Like Hayashi (1998), Wajnryb (1998) examined in detail one small element of discourse, “pragmatic ambivalence,” or what Brown and Levinson (1978) referred to as an off-the-record face threatening act. Being ambivalent allows supervisors to feel as though they are “elicit[ing] rather than impos[ing]” (Wajnryb, 1998, p. 535). Ambivalence also provides “cover” for inexperienced supervisors who lack the requisite confidence to issue directives or who are facing particularly intransigent teachers. One of Wajnryb‟s study participant was a teacher in Australia who had worked most recently in South America. The supervisor was concerned that this teacher did not fully appreciate that she needed to adjust her teaching to this new cultural context.

Wajnryb (1998) paid particular attention to a single question posed by the supervisor: “Are you still adjusting to teaching Latin American students?” (p. 537). According to Wajnryb, this question had two meanings:

1) Are you still making the adjustment from having Latin American students? and,
2) Have you recognized that there is an adjustment to be made?

The supervisor explained that "he had expressed himself ambivalently out of fear of offending [the teacher] and then having to deal with the resultant unpleasantness" (Wajnryb, 1998, p. 537). When using pragmatic ambivalence, the speaker must weigh its benefits, namely the reduced risk of giving offense, against its costs. Through follow-up interviews, Wajnryb (1998) discovered that the teacher recognized the veiled criticism in the question but chose to pretend she did not. Therefore, the face threat was still committed and the supervisor left himself unable to hold the teacher accountable for making any changes to her practice.

A further value of Wajnryb‟s (1998) study was her inclusion of extensive passages from her transcript. This material allowed readers to assess what other questions they might ask of these data. Wajnryb‟s supervisor‟s real difficulty seemed to stem from the nature of his comments subsequent to the question "Are you still adjusting to teaching Latin American students?" (p. 537), which focused less on observation than on differences in "style." The supervisor remarked to the teacher,

> I think that while it was a very well constructed and interesting way of presenting the vocabulary . . . I think that our students particularly in that first lesson of the day and particularly with the lower levels, they really need warming up. (Wajnryb, 1998, p. 539)

These were not data-focused comments; they were judgments. If the supervisor were to point to specific student or teacher behaviors, such as students with their heads on their desks, pragmatic ambivalence might have been rendered unnecessary. This observation is one that a supervision scholar would be more likely than a linguist to make, again highlighting the need for these scholars to conduct discourse analytical studies.

Tang and Chow (2007) reverted to quantification of qualitative data, and, like Reavis‟s (1977) quantitative study, revealed the limits of this type of empirical scholarship on supervision. They examined how a learning-oriented field experience assessment (LOFEA) framework,

sometimes called a rubric, helped supervisors give feedback to pre-service teachers. They found that use of the rubric yielded higher percentages of evidence-based judgments and gave the teachers a basis for assessing themselves.

Tang and Chow (2007) did not, however, specify what counted as "evidence." The following excerpt was presented as an example of a judgment with evidence: "I observed that you enjoyed the lesson . . . I also noticed that you had a good relationship with students. You were caring and interacted with students in an ‚encouraging‘ way‘" (p. 1075). No data were provided to support the use of such expressions as "You were caring" or "You had a good relationship." These omissions raise an important issue. Most of the supervision literature prescribes using data to drive conferences, but that prescription presupposes that supervisors and researchers draw a clear distinction between 1) data, 2) interpretation of data, and 3) judgments based on interpretation of data.

Language education researchers Vásquez and Reppen (2007) examined the change over time in patterns of teacher participation in postobservation conferences. The first semester‘s conferences were dominated by supervisor talk, and the supervisors felt "that if the primary objective of these meetings was to provide teachers with discursive spaces in which they could reflect on their own teaching practice, first they needed to be given opportunities to produce more talk" (p. 159). The supervisors decided to ask more questions and "position" the teachers as speakers, rather than listeners, at the outset of the conference. The second semester‘s conferences were not significantly longer, but the teachers all spoke more, some four times as much as before.

What was less clear was whether the quality of the supervision improved. Vásquez and Reppen‘s (2007) critical eye did not gaze in the same direction as a supervision scholar‘s might.

In one excerpt, for instance, a TA revealed her fear that she lacked the skills to make learning active, but, because Vásquez and Reppen‟s interest was in how the conference was used to enhance teacher reflection, the excerpt ended with this revelation. A supervisionist might ask how the supervisor acted on this implicit request for direct instruction and how useful the TAs found these conferences, compared to those conducted the semester before.

Additionally, the potentially conflicting goals of different types of supervisors became apparent in this study. Vásquez and Reppen believed the primary goal of these conferences was providing an opportunity for TAs to reflect. Zeichner and Liston (1985) similarly grounded their study in the assumption that these conferences were supposed to evoke "particular forms of reflection" (p. 155). By contrast, other researchers and practitioners may consider reflection just one of many means to achieving "the superordinate goal of supervision[, which] is the improvement of instruction" (Blumberg & Cusick, 1970).

Fernandez and Erbilgin‟s (2009) work also sheds light on the different priorities and foci of in-service and pre-service teacher supervisors. They studied the interaction of mathematics student teachers and their cooperating teachers and then compared these interactions to similar conferences in which the university supervisor (also the second author) was present. Like Vásquez and Reppen (2007), Fernandez and Erbilgin (2009) noted that the conferences were heavily weighted toward supervisor speech, raising the concern that a lack of opportunity to verbally process their experiences was preventing the student teachers from optimal learning.

Fernandez and Erbilgin (2009) asserted that the university supervisor‟s style was more "educative" because it involved asking more questions related to mathematics instruction, dwelling less on issues of general pedagogy and classroom management. This assertion again points to the need for P-12 specific studies of instructional supervision, as the role of the

cooperating teacher is fundamentally different than that of the university supervisor. Fernandez and Erbilgin (2009) privileged the discourse of the latter over the former.

Discourse analysis from a supervisionist perspective

Beginning in the early 1990s, largely in response to Holland's (1989a, b) call to action, a number of supervision scholars began performing discourse analytical studies of postobservation conferences. Roberts (1990) provided logical proofs regarding how speech in postobservation conferences was translated into action. For instance, the necessary conditions for Teacher B to perform Supervisor A's request X were:

1) X should be done for a purpose Y.
2) B has the ability to do X.
3) B has the obligation to do X.
4) A has the right to tell B to do X.

Roberts (1990) also examined how indirect speech acts might be interpreted. For example, "a supervisor's statement, 'The students are not watching the film,' may imply that the projector should be moved or that the teacher needs to control student talking" (p. 17). How teachers acted on such a statement depended on how they interpreted it.

Roberts (1990) searched transcripts for:

- "evidence of a supervisor's direct or indirect request for action,"
- the "fit between the suggested action and the purpose of the class,"
- "the indications that such appropriate action was within the teacher's repertoire," and,
- "evidence that the supervisor gave the teacher the opportunity to arrive at what the teacher consider[ed] to be an appropriate 'solution' through reflection" (p. 21).

In this fashion, Roberts (1990) attempted to apply mathematical precision to understanding why teachers might fail to act on supervisors' suggestions, despite their accuracy or value. The scope of this article did not include following up with the teachers to determine whether the conclusions Roberts reached were accurate.

In a later study, Roberts (1992) used transcripts of audio- and videotaped conferences to examine how supervisors used politeness strategies to protect the self-image, or face, of their teachers. Roberts found the most frequently used negative politeness strategies were hedging, questioning, establishing common ground, understatement, and generalization. Positive politenesses appearing most often were overstatement, hedging, and use of first person pronouns. More experienced supervisors escalated from indirect to direct speech acts based on teacher response. Less experienced supervisors performed either very high or very low numbers of face-threatening acts. The greater the face threat, the greater the politeness strategy used (Roberts, 1992).

In addition to the above findings, Roberts (1992) made some provocative, offhand observations. For example, discussing a conference conducted by "Alice" whom she dubbed "The Director," Roberts (1992) asserted that "Alice's face-threatening acts became detrimental to the conference outcomes" (p. 299). This conclusion was the result of a follow-up discussion with the teacher during which Roberts discovered that she left this conference "motivated to change and with specific ideas about how to change, but at the same time vaguely insulted" (p. 299).

Roberts's work informs the current study in several important ways. First, it provides support for triangulating data sources. While the conferences themselves were compelling data, the use of follow-up interviews allowed Roberts to confirm or reject interpretations she formed about the conference behaviors and the likelihood that the conference would yield future professional growth. Additionally, the implication that the above teacher's feelings of indignation might hinder her professional growth merit further study, as does the related question

of whether a teacher might interpret the absence of face threat to mean the absence of room for growth, a question that Vásquez‟s (2004) work also raised.

Vásquez (2004) revealed that one of the problems with supervision was the belief on some supervisors‟ parts that nurturing was synonymous with “focusing almost exclusively on the positive when delivering feedback” (p. 41). Vásquez delineated the types and numbers of politeness strategies and the contexts in which they were employed. When teachers asked for input, supervisors used fewer politeness strategies, but they still used an inordinate amount and often layered them in such a way as to make some of their advice incomprehensible. One of the most ironic portions of the study was the following excerpt, spoken by a supervisor:

> But yeah and **I think** that‟s that‟s normal. But **I think** it‟s **good** to be aware of that and think about **you know just** making sure to be really explicit. So yeah overall it was **fantastic**, **good** plans, **good** job, yeah **nice** activity. (Vasquéz, 2004, p. 50, emphasis in the original)

The portions in bold represent redressive actions used by the supervisor, including hedging (I think, you know, just), overstatement (fantastic), and attending to the TA‟s need for approval (good, nice) (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

The substance of the supervisor‟s feedback was that the TA should “be really explicit,” advice whose own explicitness was all but lost amid redress. Not surprisingly, “while TAs felt they received a great deal of positive feedback, they felt there was a lack of „constructive criticism‟” (Vásquez, 2004, p. 53). Meanwhile, the supervisors felt they had made numerous specific suggestions. The prescriptive supervision literature repeatedly warns against threatening teachers‟ feelings of self-worth. These admonishments may cause supervisors to conceal their suggestions with too much positive feedback or “indirect and attenuated” (Vásquez, 2004, p. 55) criticism. The result may be lack of clarity on the teachers‟ parts as to what, if any, changes they need to effect in their instruction.

Dungan (1993) found that teachers and supervisors both used interruptions and minimal responses (e.g., mm-hmm, yeah) but for different purposes. While "[t]eachers used interruption to seek conversational access or to add information[,] supervisors used interruptions to override teacher statements" (p. 102). Dungan identified the following pattern:

1) teacher statement;
2) supervisor interrupt;
3) teacher interrupt;
4) supervisor interrupt;
5) teacher minimal response or withdrawal from the floor.

Dungan further explained, "Continued interruption by the teacher past the second supervisor interruption resulted in conflict" (Dungan, 1993, p. 102). Supervisors who then "gave" control to the teacher "at the end of a topic or at the end of the conference" found that teachers opted not to take up this control, "especially if control had been denied earlier or conflict had been generated" (p. 103). This understanding is crucial to supervisors who seek a culture of collaboration with their teachers. In their zeal to make an important point, supervisors may inadvertently engender an adversarial relationship which will color all future interactions between the two.

Dungan (1993) found a schism between the desire on the part of supervisors to serve as facilitators and teachers‟ preference for expert supervisors. Teachers‟ expectations of conferences were that they were evaluations, whether their official nature was evaluative or not:

> When asked what [teachers‟] goals were, the most common answers were "to do well" or "To find out what I‟m doing right and wrong". Each of these responses reflects a normative orientation to conference interaction that may complement supervisors‟ goals but are not identical. (Dungan, 1993, p. 162)

Although much of the supervision literature presents the goals of supervision as "improved instruction through teacher behavioral and attitudinal changes and promotion of teacher

reflection" (Dungan, 1993, p. 163), neither the teachers nor the supervisors in Dungan‟s study focused on those qualities, suggesting a disconnect between the theory and practice of supervision.

Of further interest was Dungan‟s (1993) assertion that "summative conferencing has a deleterious effect on conference interaction if the goal of conference interaction is collegial intercourse" (p. 108). As discussed earlier, practitioners generally understand the goal of supervision to be improved instruction. Collegial intercourse is one of many conduits through which this goal may be attained. It is possible that the schism between theory and practice is due, in part, to the failure of both theorists and practitioners to agree on, appreciate, or articulate the purposes of the postobservation conference.

Waite (1995) audio-recorded postobservation conferences between four probationary teachers and their supervisors and, using conversation- and discourse analysis, identified interactions he characterized as passive, collaborative, and adversarial. Passive conferences were dominated by the supervisor (Waite, 1995). The teacher‟s contributions were largely limited to continuers and acknowledgment tokens:yeah, uh-huh, mm-hm (Liddicoat, 2007), what Dungan (1993) referred to as minimal responses. When the teacher did make an assertion, particularly one with which the supervisor disagreed, the supervisor recast the assertion and again took over the conference (Waite, 1995). Collaborative conferences, by contrast, were often marked by the teacher and supervisor speaking simultaneously with identical prosody or by the teacher correcting something the supervisor said and the supervisor accepting the repair.

It is Waite‟s (1995) analysis of adversarial conferences that may be of most use to current practitioners and supervision scholars. Interestingly, the adversity resulted largely from the supervisor‟s choices. In one excerpt, the teacher accepted the supervisor‟s explanation for a

behavior and demonstrated a desire to change the subject by using repeated minimal responses, but the supervisor continued to belabor the point. At last, the teacher "removed" herself from the conference by checking on her students. When she returned, the supervisor had moved on to a different point.

The issues Waite (1995) raised in his conclusion merit consideration. In particular, if supervisors wish to encourage collaborative conferences, they must examine their motives and relationships before engaging with a teacher. Alternatively, this observation begs the question whether a collaborative conference is always desirable. Might there be times when it is more appropriate and helpful for the supervisor to take a directive approach, and are direction and collaboration mutually exclusive? Outside the scope of Waite"s analysis was any indication of how the teachers interpreted the conference interactions or what effect the conferences had on their subsequent classroom effectiveness.

Chapter Summary

While U.S. public schools have grown physically from their beginnings as one-room schoolhouses, systemically, schools have remained fundamentally the same (Lortie, 1975). Teachers continue to work in relative isolation (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tye, 2000), a condition that allows schools to absorb high teacher turnover but hinders the collaborative inquiry and goal-sharing essential to the creation of "learning enriched" environments (Rosenholtz, 1989). Isolation also allows instructional leaders to engage in the logic of confidence (Meyer & Rowan, 1983), the belief that, in the absence of any obvious indicators to the contrary, classroom instruction must be taking place in an effective manner (Blumberg, 1980). Clinical supervision, if used effectively, could ameliorate the isolation in which teachers work, so that, instead of suffering from secondary ignorance (Tye, 2000), "[t]eachers develop new conceptions of their

work through communications in which their principal or colleagues point out new aspects of experience to them with fresh interpretations" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 3).

Much of the literature describes the process of supervision in its ideal state. Ideally, clinical supervision is a transparent process. Both the supervisor and the teacher are active participants who collaboratively establish goals and parameters (Glickman et al., 2005; Goldhammer et al., 1993). The process of supervision works to establish trust between the two parties (Cogan, 1973; Zepeda, 2007). Supervisors address teachers in a manner that is developmentally appropriate to their professional status (Glatthorn, 1997; Glickman et al., 2005). Newer teachers or those with identified deficiencies require more directive approaches while teachers who have demonstrated competence or excellence will have more latitude to define and assess their own goals (Glatthorn, 1993 ; Glickman et al., 2005). Supervisors ground their postobservation conference commentary in data, thereby encouraging teachers to reflect on their own practice (Zepeda, 2007).

There are quite a few obstacles to achieving an ideal supervisory experience. Supervisors and teachers may lack the necessary self-awareness (Glickman et al., 2005; Zepeda, 2007). In the case of supervisors, this deficiency may lead them to engage in directive behaviors disguised as non-directive behaviors (Hayashi, 1996), which teachers may interpret as manipulation (Cogan, 1973). Supervisor behavior may also be the result of role ambiguity or role conflict. The literature describes a multitude of supervisor roles, among them superior, colleague, facilitator, expert, consultant, and teacher (Cogan, 1973; Mosher & Purpel, 1972; Zepeda, 2007). Inexperienced or insecure supervisors, unsure of how they can be most effective, may try to play all these roles in a single conference.

An additional impediment to successful conferences is the hypersensitivity to criticism that teachers develop, largely as a result of working apart from other adults on a day-to-day basis (Elmore, 2004). The literature continually warns supervisors against inflicting emotional damage (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer et al., 1993), leaving many supervisors leery of fully committing themselves to any comment that might be perceived as critical. As a result, supervisor speech may be laden with politeness strategies that blunt criticism but also obscure constructive advice (Vásquez, 2004; Wajnryb, 1998).

Instructional supervision lacks of a robust body of empirical research examining in-situ conference behavior (Holland, 1989a). Most publications are prescriptive, theoretical, or rely on self-report. Supervisors, future supervisors, and instructors of future supervisors have limited access to transcripts of conferences from which they can learn how successful and unsuccessful supervision is co-constructed by the participants. Studies of this sort reside mostly in the literature on pre-service teachers and language educators (e.g., Hayashi, 1996; Vásquez, 2004; Wajnryb, 1998). While some of the findings of these studies translate to a P-12 context, others do not. In general, the goals university supervisors have for pre-service teachers are different from those instructional supervisors have for in-service teachers (e.g., Fernandez & Erbilgin, 2009), and the research questions posed by linguists are different from those asked by supervisionists.

The current study seeks to fill the gap in the supervision literature by revealing what takes place during conferences between supervisors and in-service teachers. The study further examines how each participant intends or interprets what is said in the conferences. Finally, the study identifies the sources of technical, semantic, and influential problems of communication (Alfonso et al., 1981).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The purpose of this study was to collect and analyze data that would provide answers to the following guiding research questions:

1) What occurs during a postobservation conference between a teacher and supervisor?
2) What meanings and understandings does each participant construct from these conferences?
3) What factors may account for any disparities between participants in meanings and understandings

To this end, seven teacher-supervisor dyads and one triad were audio-recorded in conference. Material from these conferences was then used to customize the interview protocols for "self-confrontation" interviews (Bertone et al., 2006, p. 195) with each individual. Follow-up interviews provided additional information about meanings the participants formulated from or intended by their conference interactions and how those meanings were constructed. Findings were reached using analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981; LeCompte, 2000).

This chapter includes the following sections:

1) a detailed explication of the conceptual frameworks that guided the research design;
2) a description of the research design;
3) a thorough depiction of the data sources, including individual participants as well as the school and district in which they work;
4) an account of the data analysis process; and,
5) an evaluation of the study"s limitations

Conceptual Frameworks

The umbrella term "qualitative research" refers to a host of disciplines and epistemologies, all of which are based on the belief that, unlike molecules, plants, or weather, "human (social) action . . . is inherently meaningful" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191). While quantitative research is appropriate for studying processes that remain fixed over time, the qualitative researcher recognizes that human behavior is ever-changing and context-dependent (Merriam, 2002). Social science researchers who employ quantitative methods may be able to reveal *that* something happened but rarely *why* and almost never what import or meaning the study participants made of what happened. Qualitative research is appropriate to studies that seek answers to questions of meaning and understanding. One of the frameworks used to address meaning is hermeneutics

Hermeneutics

At its simplest, hermeneutics is "the theory and practice of interpretation" (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 342). The term is derived from the Greek deity Hermes, whose job was to interpret divine messages for mortals. Freeman (2008) explained, "To do so successfully, [Hermes] had to understand both the language and the mind-set of the gods (so as to communicate the intended message) and those of humans (so as to communicate it in a way they could understand)" (p. 385). Hermeneutics inhabits the slippery space between the text—be it a book, a work of art, or a human being—and the individual experiencing it. Hermeneutics examines both meaning and how that meaning is created.

Hermeneutics has three subdivisions: conservative, critical, and philosophical. Conservative hermeneuticists concern themselves with arriving at a "truthful" interpretation of text which "involv[es] bracketing out their foreconceptions to find the true meaning of the story

that is determined by the author‟s intent" (Freeman, 2008, p. 386). There is a decidedly positivist bent to conservative hermeneutics that conflicts with many qualitative researchers‟ belief that meaning is a social construction (Blumer, 1969; Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 2002) and highly dependent on context.

Critical hermeneutics, by contrast, attempts to reveal how socio-political context shapes both the author‟s presentation of text and the reader‟s interpretation of it (Freeman, 2008; Smith, 1993). A critical hermeneutic view is aimed at "penetrating false consciousness, discovering the ideological nature of our belief systems, promoting distortion-free communication, and thereby accomplishing a liberating consensus" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 11). There is an ironic element of conservatism in critical hermeneutics in that it believes itself capable of identifying false consciousness and banishing it, thereby attaining "truthful" consciousness (Gallagher, 1992).

Finally, philosophical hermeneutics, the epistemology this study employs, rejects the primacy of either the text or the reader and focuses, instead, on the space in which both interact. Rather than bracketing one‟s foreconceptions, philosophical hermeneutics uses them, recognizing that "[i]t is only in the presence of our prejudices that we are open to our own experiences and allow these experiences to make a claim on us" (Smith, 1993, p. 195). Whereas critical and conservative hermeneutics advocate that scholars try to free themselves of biases, philosophical hermeneutic inquiry engages researchers‟ biases in a dialogue with the "other." It is from their biases that researchers form a point-of-view.

Philosophical hermeneutics rejects the idea of an absolute truth in the Platonic sense, but it does not go to the extreme of asserting that there is no truth or that all "truths" are equally valid. As Ezzy (2002) asserted, "Data do shape theory, and some theories truthfully represent data and some theories do not" (p. 24). A truthful depiction of the data is arrived at by constant

movement between the data and the interpretation of it (Blumer, 1969; Ezzy, 2002; Geertz, 1973; Polkinghorne, 1995), a process hermeneutics holds in common with other theoretical traditions, namely symbolic interactionism.

Smith (1993) further explained, "[T]o understand an individual part of a text requires that one understand the whole text; yet, it is equally the case that to understand the whole text requires that one understand the individual parts" (p. 186). Smith's idea can be best understood by way of analogy. To decode a written word, the reader must know the sound that each letter makes. At the same time, for readers of English to know what sound each of the letters makes, they must know the word. Consider how a reader would go about decoding the words "rough," "slough," "plough," and "dough." The cycling back and forth from part to whole and from data to interpretation is referred to as the "hermeneutic circle" (Ezzy, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Gallagher (1992) expanded the "circle" into a figure-eight in which are located the interpreter, the object of interpretation, and the tradition in which both the object and the interpreter exist (Figure 3.1).

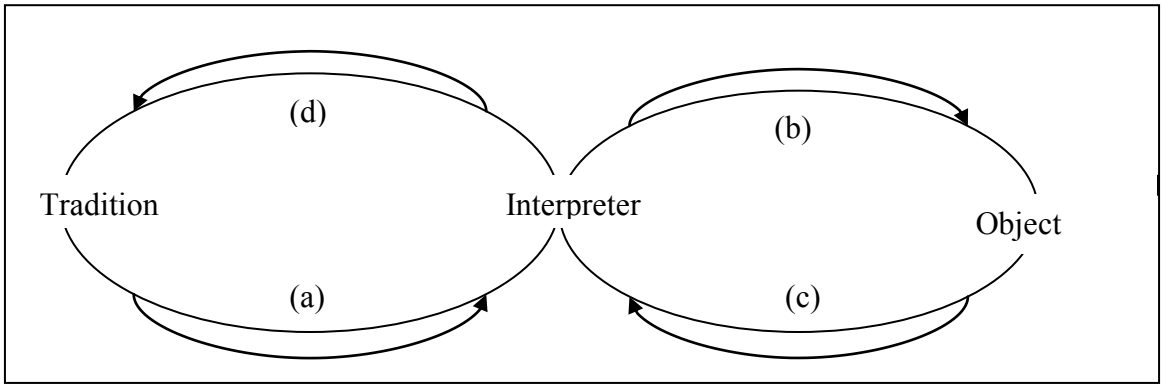

Figure 3.1. The Hermeneutic Figure-Eight (adapted from Gallagher, 1992, p. 106).

Gallagher (1992) explained that,

> [i]n this figure, the anterior operation of tradition (a) constrains . . . the fore-conceptions (b) which the interpreter employs . . . The feedback (c) . . . will motivate a new projection of meaning. Thus, the relations (b) and (c) represent the hermeneutical circle . . . In the

> process of interpretation, the interpreter‟s relation to a particular tradition can change (d). This change . . . involves a transformation of the tradition. (Gallagher, 1992, pp. 106-107)

The current study adds yet another level of complexity to the model, because, for each supervision conference, there were three interpreters, two of whom, the teacher and the supervisor, also functioned as text. The supervisor sought to understand the teacher and vice versa. Meanwhile, I, the researcher, attempted to make sense of both teacher and supervisor, allowing each new revelation to affect my understanding of what constituted effective supervision.

Whether moving in circles, figure-eights, or clover-leafs, the hermeneutic process is an effort to arrive at a genuine understanding, "however temporary and limited" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 25), as opposed to an eternal but potentially flawed truth. Hermeneutics demands that the researcher be prepared to reject earlier interpretations and the theories on which these interpretations are predicated if the data do not support them. One who is hermeneutically aware is always "open, vulnerable, and in question" (Davey, 2006, p. 17). In theory, hermeneutic inquiry can continue indefinitely.

Analytics of Interpretive Practice: Conversation and Discourse Analysis

This study was also informed by both conversation and discourse analysis. Though often used interchangeably (Gee et al., 1992), the terms conversation analysis (CA) and discourse analysis (DA) refer to different activities. CA studies "the structure of talk itself . . . the conversational „machinery‟ through which meaning emerges . . . the sequential, utterance-by-utterance, socially structuring features of talk" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 492). By repeated, minute examination of speech, CA identifies how individuals co-construct conversations, how they maintain order, and what causes that order to break down. CA has been

criticized for, in essence, losing sight of the forest by looking too closely at the trees. Some "ethnomethodologists . . . argue that the *in situ* details of everyday life are ignored at the risk of reducing social life to recorded talk and conversational sequencing" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 492, emphasis in the original).

Discourse analysis (DA) takes a broader view of how language is used in combination with "actions, objects in the environment . . . attitudes, thoughts, [and] values" (Gee et al., 1992, p. 233) to make meaning. The types of questions that might be answered by discourse analysis include "What can we learn about social and interpersonal dynamics of power and control by looking at patterns of initiations and responses in conversations?" or "Can the structures of conversations between [supervisors] and [teachers] tell us something about the negotiation of successful or unsuccessful working relationships?" (Gee et al., 1992, p. 230).

Gubrium and Holstein (2000) advocated taking the strengths of both CA and DA and using them complementarily in what they termed an "analytics of interpretive practice," the aim of which

> is to document the interplay between the practical reasoning and conversational machinery entailed in constructing a sense of everyday reality on the one hand and the institutional conditions, resources, and related discourse that substantively nourish and interpretively mediate interaction on the other. (p. 492)

Gubrium and Holstein (2000) did not recommend hybridization of CA and DA so much as "a skilled juggling act, concentrating alternately on the myriad hows and whats of everyday life . . . documenting each in turn and making informative references to the other in the process" (p. 499-500). The end result should be "a contextually scenic and a contextually constructive picture of everyday language-in-use" (p. 500). The current study sought to draw such a "picture."

Politeness Theory

Politeness theory is not a normative theory about how polite speech ought to be conducted. Rather, it seeks to explain and predict the strategies individuals use to protect their "face" and the faces of those with whom they interact (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967). Goffman (1967) defined "face" as "an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (p. 5). Individuals are considered "in face" or "maintaining face" when the image they have of themselves is consistent with others" judgments of them (Goffman, 1967). Brown and Levinson (1978) separated the term "face" into positive face, the desire for approval and appreciation, and negative face, the wish to remain "unimpeded" (p. 58). Any action that puts one"s face at risk is deemed a face-threatening act (FTA) (Figure 3.2).

Positive FTAs	Expressions of disapproval Criticism Complaints and reprimands Accusations Contradictions or disagreements Challenges
Negative FTAs	Orders and requests Suggestions Reminders Warnings Promises Compliments[1]

Figure 3.2 Examples of Face Threatening Acts

A supervisory conference is, by definition, a threat to negative face. Any suggestions for improvement are likewise negative face threats, and the recognition of "deficiencies" that prompt such suggestions are positive face threats. Goffman (1967) asserted, "The surest way for a person

[1] While it may seem counterintuitive to consider such affirmative behaviors as compliments or offers as threats, in polite society these acts obligate the recipient either to return the favor or deny it. Consider the following, fairly typical interchange: "You look fantastic!" "Me?! What about you?" Goffman (1967) called this the "after you, Alfonse" technique (p. 30).

to prevent threats to his face is to avoid contacts in which these threats are likely to occur" (p. 15). This is not an option for instructional supervisors and teachers, although some, in an effort to preserve face, will avoid or gloss over certain topics.

Supervisors who opt to perform an FTA can take several paths. The least risky is an "off the record speech act" which allows the supervisor to refrain from committing to any particular intention. Supervisors can commit off-record FTAs in a number of ways. One is to state a recommendation as a general rule (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Roberts, 1990), as the supervisor in the following excerpt does: "Lynne [an experienced teacher] has a very small bag of tricks she uses „cause she doesn‟t need to use many. New teachers have to have a bigger bag of tricks" (Waite, 1993, p. 685). Verne, the supervisor, made the generalization that all new teachers need more behavior management "tricks," but the essence of this remark was that Doug, the specific new teacher to whom he was speaking, had failed to demonstrate effective management of his classroom. Both Doug‟s positive and negative faces were protected here. Verne neither explicitly criticized him, nor did he insist that Doug learn new tricks. Doug could reasonably be expected to intuit these understandings.

An even more oblique off-record critique would involve presenting the teacher with data that the supervisor believed were indicative of an instructional weakness with the expectation that the teacher will arrive at the same analysis. The following is an invented addendum to the earlier example offered by Zepeda (2007): "Here are the events that led to the small group [work]. . ." (p. 174).

> At 9:02, you asked students to get into groups, and by about 9:08 they were situated. You explained the task, wrote the instructions on the board, and let the students ask clarifying questions. At 9:15, you let the students get the materials they needed. All the groups were on-task by 9:20.

A reflective teacher will note that 18 minutes elapsed between the introduction of small groups and the commencement of actual work. This fact is not neutral but it allows the supervisor to avoid making an explicit criticism. Essential to the efficacy of off-record statements, however, is the ability of the hearer to reflect on and translate the content of the statement. Speakers who go off-record may be seen as "tactful [and] non-coercive" but, by seeking to "avoid responsibility for the potentially face-damaging interpretation" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 71), the speaker also runs the risk of having the recipient fail to recognize that a request or directive is being made.

Unfortunately, on-record speech acts come with their own communicative limitations. Alfonso et al. (1981) noted, "When clear incompatibility exists between the sender's message and the approval accorded by receivers, the latter tend to misperceive the actual content and distort it in a direction favorable to their own prior position" (p. 156). Teacher who are offended by supervisors' suggestions may deny the validity of the suggestions (Roberts, 1990). Simply put, a positive FTA not only has the potential to inflict emotional damage, the listener may not be able to "hear" it.

Because, as Glickman et al. (2005) explained, "Most of us find it difficult to look another person squarely in the eye and say, 'I want you to do this'" (p. 121), the supervisor who goes on-the-record will normally use a politeness strategy to soften the impact of the FTA or indicate that no threat was intended (Brown & Levinson, 1979). There are a vast number of politeness strategies, one of which is the assertion of common ground (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Among the methods of establishing common ground is to speak in the first person plural, e.g., "We kind of moved a little fast from mean to median to mode" (Roberts, 1992, p. 297). The use of

"pronouns of power and solidarity" (Waite, 1995, p. 41) reinforces that both the supervisor and the teacher have the same goals and values and, therefore, could not possibly disagree.

Understatement and overstatement are other commonly used politeness strategies. The former seeks to minimize the impact of any request being made, as in the following question: "Can I ask you a *tiny* favor?" By contrast, the latter attempts to assure the hearer that the speaker fully recognizes how great an imposition she is making: "I know you've been killing yourself trying to get this report ready, but . . ."

One of the most often employed politeness strategies is hedging, which invests one's feelings with vagueness, blunting their effect. Expressions such as "sort of" or "like," are a form of hedging, as are tag lines at the end of requests that imply the hearer is being given options. For instance, a speaker might follow a request to have dinner at a particular restaurant with "if you want" (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

Hermeneutics, the analytics of interpretive practice, and politeness theory provided lenses through which I viewed my data. They also informed the study design, enabling me to collect data that was appropriate and valuable to an examination of meaning making.

Rationale and Research Design

This study is best classified as a multi-method qualitative field study. The temptation is great to assert membership in such traditions as ethnography or ethnomethodology, in part because the study borrowed methods from both traditions and in part because this terminology sounds more academic. Goetz and LeCompte (1981) explained that "[o]ther types of research are often called ethnographic, but consist only of imposing some sort of category-coding system upon the stream of behavior" (p. 55). There is a danger in the imprecision with which these and

other terms are used (Crotty, 1996), and so I have endeavored to specify when the research is situated wholly within a particular tradition and when it is merely borrowing from one.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there exist few empirical studies on teacher supervision, fewer still that use recorded supervision conferences as their primary data source. Empirical studies tended to rely on forms of self-report, such as interviews and surveys (e.g., Ovando & Harris, 1993; Ponticell & Zepeda, 2004; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). Those studies that employed audio-recorded conferences as their primary data source provided a useful jumping-off point for the design of this study.

Follow-up interviews

In addition to recording postobservation conferences, Vásquez (2004) also conducted follow-up interviews with her participants and had them complete a questionnaire. In this fashion, she was able to test her assumptions against the participants‟ perceptions of their conferences. Similarly, after examining videotaped postobservation conferences between a pre-service physical education teacher and her cooperating teacher in a French high school, Bertone et al. (2006) then videotaped individual "self-confrontation" interviews. During these interviews, both participants were asked to discuss the motives or intentions behind their speech in the conference. Through their use of follow-up interviews, both Vásquez (2004) and Bertone et al. (2006) discovered disparities between the messages supervisors thought they sent and those that teachers received.

Hayashi (1996) analyzed conference transcripts to discern how supervisors managed the dispreferred response of refusal, finding they tended to spread the response over a series of speech acts in an effort to blunt its effect. Cogan (1973) asserted that many teachers found this technique a form of manipulation and, therefore, counterproductive. However, Hayashi‟s (1996)

study did not include follow-up interviews, so the teachers' interpretation of supervisor behavior was not examined. Wajnryb (1998), by contrast, did employ follow-up interviews in her study of pragmatic ambivalence. In so doing, Wajnryb discovered that, not only does pragmatic ambivalence sometimes fail to prevent the listener from perceiving a comment as an FTA, it can also leave the listener unclear as to what, if any, changes must be made. The literature indicated very clearly that, in addition to examining conference behaviors, follow-up, or self-confrontation, interviews were necessary for a full explication of participant meaning-making.

Stimulated recall

Dorr-Bremme (1985) advocated the use of observation as the primary data source, "turning to interviews only as a way of obtaining elaboration on what was observed" (p. 73). The current study relies primarily on the audio-recorded conferences for its findings, using the interviews to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses formed from the conference recordings. Dorr-Bremme further recommended "bringing the interactional scene to the interview with a recording" (p. 77). In addition to more general questions regarding the meanings they constructed during the postobservation conference, study participants were asked to listen to audio clips from the conference and respond to specific questions about the clips. This use of stimulated recall "facilitate[d] respondents' ability to report on their actions and thoughts in terms of the everyday interactional scene, rather than in terms of the interview context" (Dorr-Bremme, 1985, p. 77). The audio clip, in effect, recreated the conference, allowing participants to provide more accurate recollections of their meaning-making at the time of the conference.

Data Sources

One of the greatest difficulties the study presented was finding districts and schools in Georgia, where I resided at the time of the study, that could serve as data collection sites. The

state does not mandate postobservation conferences, which take place only at the teacher's request. However, some districts have instituted more rigorous standards, and conferences in these districts are either required or strongly suggested. It was to these schools and districts that requests to participate were made. My major professor and committee chair counted among her 52 former advisees a multitude of Georgia principals, assistant principals, and superintendents, none of whom had ever denied her access to their institutions. This study represented the first such experience in 11 years. Appendix C, "Why I Had to Travel 800 Miles to Gather Data: A Cautionary Tale," provides a more complete explanation of why Georgia schools were not an option.

Site selection

Initially as a back-up plan, I approached several colleagues in Illinois, where I had taught for over a decade, and received an enthusiastic response from my former principal, Anita Boyd[2], currently the principal of a high school where I have never taught. Another former principal, Ron O'Shea, also now at a different school, granted access as well, but I opted not to pursue this lead for a number of reasons, outlined below.

Sample size

Morse (2000) explained that sample size should be dictated by "the quality of the data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic . . . the number of interviews per participant . . . and the qualitative method and study design used" (p. 3). Patton (2002) added to these criteria "what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 344). This last criterion, I cringe to admit, was among the most relevant to my decision. While "[s]ampling to the point of redundancy is an ideal, [it is] one that works best for basic research, unlimited

[2] All participant names are pseudonyms unless otherwise noted.

timelines, and unconstrained resources (Patton, 2002, p. 246). My access to conferences was limited to those conferences scheduled to be conducted during the time that I was collecting data. Were I able to remain in the field for an entire academic year, hypothetically I would have had access to dozens of conferences. Externally imposed deadlines, however, precluded such a commitment.

Patton (2002) listed 16 sample types and enumerated the relative merits and demerits of each. By Patton‟s definition, mine was a convenience sample, the least purposeful sample available. My major professor and I discussed the option of imposing selection criteria on the participants. Ultimately, I decided against doing so. There was so little research in this area that I had no reason to assume a more information-rich interview or conference would be obtained from a department chair (DC) than an assistant principal (AP) or a new teacher versus a tenured one. Furthermore, I had consent to record only eight conferences. Imposing selection criteria would have reduced that number even further.

Achieving data saturation

By accepting the invitation to collect data at a second high school, I could have increased the size of my sample, but that might have created different threats to the study. The maximum number of participants would have been somewhere between 28 and 40—14-20 pairs of teachers and supervisors. This is still a fairly small number. Additionally, whatever the sample size, the quality of my data would remain suspect because I had no selection criteria. Therefore, I set about trying to maximize the value of whatever sample I could access. Although Morse (2006) and Patton (2002) were explicit in asserting that no one can say how large a sample must be without first knowing the specifics of the study, Guest et al. (2006) modestly disagreed and sought a “general yardstick . . . to estimate the point at which [data] saturation is likely to occur”

(p. 61). In their study of sex workers in Africa, 73% of their codes were established in the first six interviews. The next six yielded 92%. While Guest et al. (2006) stopped short of saying that "six to twelve interviews will always be enough" (Guest et al., 2006, p. 79), they made a convincing case for that number in a phenomenological study that employed interviews as the primary data source.

It is worth noting that, although mine was not a phenomenological study in the strictest sense, it was concerned with the lived experiences of its participants. Furthermore, interviews were my secondary data source. The primary unit of analysis was the conference dyad. Thus, my decision to collect data only at Anita's school yielded an N of eight, somewhere in the low to mid-range of what Guest et al. (2006) found an acceptable number.

Sample homogeneity

Guest et al. (2006) cited consensus theory as one way of asserting the trustworthiness of small sample sizes. Such samples "can be quite sufficient in providing complete and accurate information within a particular cultural context, as long as the participants possess a certain degree of expertise about the domain of inquiry ('cultural competence')" (p. 74). Additionally, Guest et al. noted that the more homogenous the participants, the smaller the sample required for a study that attempts "to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior" (p. 76). My goal, then, was to maximize the homogeneity of the sample.

Guest et al. (2006) found that, even when they added participants from a different country, presumably increasing the heterogeneity of the sample, only five new codes (4%) were added. This finding would suggest that adding another school would pose minimal risk to the sample's homogeneity. On the other hand, my experience working for both principals gave me reason to anticipate extremely different conference behaviors from the two sets of supervisors.

To increase the quality of my data, I decided to locate my study solely at Anita‟s school, recognizing that my findings would be provisional and that further research would be necessary before any generalizations could be drawn from the data.

Profile of Selected School

Study participants were recruited from currently practicing ninth through twelfth grade teachers at Upland Hills North High School (UHN), a large comprehensive high school, located in a suburb approximately 25 miles away from Chicago. The indicators that usually accompany low student achievement were minimal at UHN (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1
2009 Indicators of School Vitality, Upland Hills North High School

Receives Title I funding	no
Dropout rate	2.0
Chronic Truancy	2.1
Mobility	3.7
Attendance	95.5
Average class size	20.6
Composite ACT scores[3]	23.4/36
% of students who meet or exceed PSAE[4] standards in Reading	76
% of students who meet or exceed PSAE standards in Mathematics	76.2
% of students who meet or exceed PSAE standards in Science	73.2
Mean years of teacher experience[5]	14.6
% of teachers with Master‟s degrees or better	86.3
% of teachers with emergency of provisional credentials	0.3
Per pupil expenditure	$ 13,917
Mean teacher salary	$ 86,766
Mean administrator salary	$123,793

These aggregate figures suggested that UHN was doing quite well. However, when the figures were disaggregated, a more nuanced picture emerged (Table 3.2). A significant achievement gap existed between white and Asian students and those in other subgroups. No African-American students were represented at the highest level of achievement, and over two-thirds of

[3] All high school juniors in Illinois take the ACT, not only those who are college-bound. Those scores are factored into each school‟s AYP figures.
[4] Prairie State Achievement Exam.
[5] Figures in the shaded areas are district-wide, not school-specific

the African-American student population failed to achieve proficiency in any of the three content areas. Under the terms of No Child Left Behind, UHN had failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress and was in Year 2 of Academic Watch status during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Nevertheless, in 2009, UHN was named a Silver Medal School by *U.S. News & World Report*, a designation that uses "data from state standardized tests, analyzes the proficiency rates on tests for the least advantaged student groups and measures participation and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) tests" (Upland Hills High School District, 2008). These measures are outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.2
2009 Student information, Upland Hills North High School

Demographic Group		% of total pop.	Grad. Rate	PSAE[6] Reading Scores				PSAE Math Scores				PSAE Science Scores			
				1[7]	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Male				2.8	22.5	53	21.7	4.4	16.1	51.0	28.5	3.2	21.7	51.8	23.3
Female				2.7	20	57.6	19.6	3.5	21.5	54.3	20.7	2.7	34.5	48.2	14.5
White		81.5	95.2	2.2	17.1	57.6	23.2	2.4	16.8	54.3	26.5	1.7	25.1	52	21.2
Black		4.4	100	4.8	61.9	33.3	0	14.3	57.1	28.6	0	14.3	57.1	28.6	0
Hispanic		5.7	81.8	8.6	37.1	48.6	5.7	5.7	31.4	54.3	8.6	14.3	45.7	40	0
Asian/Pacific Islander		4.8	85.7	0	22.7	68.2	9.1	4.5	4.5	54.5	36.4	0	18.2	63.6	18.2
Native American		0.4	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Multi-racial		3.1	100	7.1	35.7	21.4	35.7	21.4	14.3	35.7	28.6	0	42.9	28.6	28.6
Low income[8]		11.6	83	8.3	48.3	41.7	1.7	15.0	36.7	40	8.3	11.7	48.3	38.3	1.7
Limited English Proficiency		1.0	85.7												
Students with disabilities	IEP[9]			15.6	50	31.3	3.1	15.4	47.7	30.8	6.2	17.2	54.7	26.6	1.6
	Non-IEP	9.1		.9	17.0	58.9	23.2	2.3	14.5	55.9	27.3	.9	24.3	53.4	21.4

[6] Prairie State Achievement Exam
[7] The PSAE is scored on a scale of 1-4, respectively representing limited, basic, proficient, and advanced knowledge skills.
[8] Defined as students eligible for free/reduced price lunch
[9] Students with IEPs indicating that the PSAE would not be appropriate are eligible for the Illinois Alternative Assessment.

Table 3.3

Silver Medal Performance Data for Upland Hills North High School

Category	Description	Score
Overall student performance		
State test performance index	A measure of the mastery of state tests	97.3
Poverty-adjusted performance index	A measure of the "distance" from statistically expected performance	1.28
Disadvantaged student performance		
Disadvantaged students' state test proficiency rate	A measure of the aggregate proficiency rates of the school's most typically disadvantaged students	49.4
Disadvantaged students' performance gap	The differential between the school's disadvantaged students' proficiency rates and the state average for similar students	22.2
Non-disadvantaged students' state test proficiency rate	A measure of the aggregate proficiency rates of the school's least typically disadvantaged students	67.5
Current state test achievement gap	A measure of the difference between the proficiency rates achieved by disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in the school	18.1
College-ready student performance		
College readiness index	A measure of the degree to which students master college-level material	27.9
Quality-adjusted exams per test taker	Focuses on the average number of tests that receive passing scores[10]	2.5
AP participation rate	Percentage of 12th graders who took at least one AP test during high school	32.8%
Quality-adjusted AP participation rate	Number of students tested who received at least one passing score divided by the total number of 12th graders	26.3%
AP Participation passing rate	Percentage of test-takers who passed at least one exam	80.2%
Exams per test-taker	Number of tests taken divided by the number of test takers	3.1
Exam passing rate	Percentage of AP exams that received passing scores	82.1%

Adapted from *U.S. News & World Report* (2009)

[10] A passing score on the Advanced Placement exam is a 3 out of a possible 5. UHN does not offer International Baccalaureate exams.

Individual Participant Profiles (in alphabetical order)

Seventeen individuals participated in the study, each of whom I briefly describe below. Teacher profiles include information about their classroom practice, information that was garnered during very short (<20 minutes) observations of their teaching. I requested permission from each teacher to sit in on a class, not for evaluative purposes but to "flesh out" these descriptions.

Table 3.4
Study Participants

Name	Title or Subject Taught	Yrs. in Current Position	Yrs. in Ed.
Administrators			
Anita Boyd	Principal	5	32
Mike Strauss	Assoc. Principal for Curriculum and Instruction	5	26
Hal Bennington	Asst. Principal for Student Activities	5	11
Colleen Davidson	Athletic Director	5	19
Brenda Margolis	English DC	18	35
Phin Carson	Mathematic DC	4	10
Allegra Del Amitri	Applied Arts and Technology DC	4	13
Moira Cole	Science DC	6	16
Ruth Baye	World Languages DC	<1	15
Teachers			
Holly Anderson	Family and Consumer Sciences[11] teacher	16	27
Bartholomew VanDerBeek	English and Theater teacher	8	15
Grant Simon	Mathematics teacher	10	11
Lynn McFarley	Music teacher	3	7
Al Harris	Science teacher	3	4
Lauren Hart	Science teacher	<1	<1
Molly Sheridan	French teacher	<1	<1
Lucy Miller	English teacher	<1	<1

Holly Anderson, Family and Consumer Sciences teacher. At age 59, Holly had been teaching a total of 27 years, beginning in the middle grades. After nine years, she took a decade off to raise her children before gradually moving back into the classroom, first as a substitute teacher and eventually in a full-time capacity. She had been at UHN for 16 years. Her hair in a

[11] Previously called Home Economics

perfectly coifed chin-length bob, Holly completely conformed to my internal image of the archetypal home economics teacher. Extremely organized, she provided students with pre-printed recipe sheets on which they filled in Holly‟s instructions for the brownies they would be making from scratch the following day. When one student balked at the amount of time the recipe would require, Holly assured the students that, once they tried them, they would forever abandon boxed brownie mixes.

Ruth Baye, World Languages Department Chair. Ruth was UHN‟s newest department chair, having taken over the role the year the study was conducted. Ruth was promoted from within after teaching French and English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) at UHN for ten years. Before that, she taught overseas for four years. She was still in the process of completing her administrative certification, called a Type 75 in Illinois. By law, therefore, she could not conduct observations alone and must be shadowed by an already certified administrator. Her partner for the observation and conference that provided the data for this study was Mike Strauss, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction.

Hal Bennington, Assistant Principal for Student Activities. Prior to entering administration, Hal taught chemistry and biology for six years at another suburban high school best known as the alma mater of a former first lady. Hal had been in his current post for five years, part of the administrative team that the current principal brought in when she took the job.

Anita Boyd, Principal. Anita had been principal of UHN for five years. Previously, she served as principal of a nearby high school, working her way up through the administrative ranks over the course of 14 years after teaching English for 13. Through her professionalism and diplomacy, she had weathered some extremely taxing incidents both at UHN and at her previous post. On the other hand, she was not apt to ignore or endure situations she found intolerable.

Anita took seriously her job as instructional leader of the school and, despite her diplomacy, had ruffled some feathers of both faculty and mid-level administrators who defended the status quo.

Phin Carson, Mathematics Department Chair. After teaching for six years, Phin was promoted from within four years prior to the study. The previous DC resigned that position but continued as a math department faculty member. Phin‟s previous status as peer created a bit of tension for him when he assumed a superordinate role. He had considered pursuing his career in another district to eliminate the complexity of these previous relationships.

Moira Cole, Science Department Chair. Moira had served as Science Department Chair for 6 years after teaching biology and chemistry for 10. Personnel responsibilities had made he year in which the study was conducted difficult for Moira. In the weeks leading up to our interview, she had been required to fire two teachers. One, Lauren Hart, is a participant in this study. Another non-tenured teacher was also released but only after a fractious debate during which students, parents, and members of her own department cast aspersions at Moira‟s motives and credentials. The experience had left her somewhat gun-shy. She remarked, "I can see why people don‟t fire people. It has been a miserable, horrible experience."

Colleen Davidson, Athletic Director. Colleen had been the Athletic Director (AD) for five years. Previously, she taught physical education (P.E.) while serving as Assistant AD for two years after transferring from the Upland Hills South campus where she taught P.E. for 12 years.

Allegra Del Amitri, Applied Arts & Technology Department Chair. Formerly a business education teacher for nine years, Allegra had come to UHN four years before the study. An undergraduate finance major and former FDIC employee, she found it somewhat comical that she was head of a department that included Family and Consumer Sciences. She confessed, "I

know nothing about food or cooking other than I like to eat it and I like to dial take-out." While she struggled at times with unfamiliar subject matter, she did not dwell on these deficits, focusing instead on issues of pedagogy and practice. She pointed out that, were she to continue into upper level administration, she would be evaluating teachers in even less familiar subject areas.

Al Harris, Science teacher. Al was 30 years old and in his fourth year of teaching. He had worked as a professional chemist for a year and a half and left, mostly because of the monotony of the work. A runner in college, Al was the head coach of the track team. He taught five classes a day, four of which were honors level chemistry or biology. He had one section of regular level biology, a senior elective.

Lauren Hart, Science teacher. Lauren was a first year teacher of physics and earth science. Petite and pretty, Lauren could easily be mistaken for one of her own students—until she spoke. She had a strong voice and, unlike many young teachers, all her declarative statements ended in a downward inflection. To introduce a physics lesson on calculating "impulse," Lauren climbed onto a chair and asked her students, "Why doesn't it hurt when you fall on a pile of balls, but it does hurt if you fall on a concrete floor?" She leapt off the chair, feigning a torn ligament in her knee upon landing. Back to physics, Lauren pointed the students to the equation J=F x t (impulse=force x time). Given that the force (her weight x her speed) doesn't change, she asked, "What is the difference between landing on balls and landing on the floor?"

Brenda Margolis, English Department Chair. Brenda had served as English chair at UHN for the past 18 years. She had been a teacher for 35. In that time, she had seen quite a few supervision models come and go and had a healthy skepticism of educational trends. However,

she had avoided the cynicism that often accompanies longevity in the profession. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Brenda also taught two Advanced Placement courses and worked as a reading specialist, as well as serving on several district-wide committees.

Lynn McFarley, Choral Music teacher. Lynn was in her third year of teaching at UHN, but taught four years previously in a suburb approximately 60 miles southwest of Chicago. She was 31 years old and recently returned from maternity leave after having her first child. She was, by her own admission, sleep-deprived and "a little scatterbrained." She had a comfortable rapport with her students and demanded high quality performance without seeming autocratic. During a vocal exercise by her female choir, she noticed some poor posture and lackluster energy and scolded, "I feel like this is freshman year. Legs uncrossed! Come on; don't make me go around the room one by one!" When the girls did well, she was equally explicit with her praise, "Do you hear it? You hear it? Good! We're like 87% there."

Lucy Miller, English teacher. Although fresh out of an undergraduate teacher preparation program, Lucy's demeanor belied her youth and inexperience. As her students filtered into the room, Lucy engaged several in a discussion of the past weekend's first round of the NCAA men's basketball tournament. After returning papers to a class of sophomores, she explained, "If you are going to revise, I'm going to ask that you make some significant changes. And you have to write an explanation of what changes you made and why." She then asked a student to repeat back to her the conditions under which they could revise. Another young man seemed determined not to understand the instructions, largely because he had not been listening to most of them. Lucy did not allow his obtuseness to derail her and said gently but firmly, "If you're still confused, see me after class. We need to move on."

Mike Strauss, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction. Mike was part of the administrative team that the new principal brought in five years before. He had worked as a Dean of students for the same principal at her previous high school. He began his career in administration as a high school assistant principal and a middle school principal in a much smaller district. His teaching background was in high school social studies, which he taught for twelve years.

Molly Sheridan, French teacher. At 28, Molly was a few years older than other first year teachers, having worked in a variety of occupations before returning to school to attain her teaching certification. Fairly subdued with adults, Molly positively effervesced in front her students. The learning objective of the class I observed her teach was to conjugate the verb "savoir" or "to know." Molly put the conjugation on the overhead and gave the class five minutes to write it down. A young woman asked, "Do you have a pen or pencil I could borrow?" "Jayda, *je ne suis pas* Office Max," Kelly chided. As the class read the sentences in the book, Kelly continually mocked their creepy, voyeuristic implications: "*Nous savons qui vous êtes*—We know who you are." Whenever the class laughed at something she said, whether intentionally funny or not, she passionately insisted, "That's not a joke!" She very obviously loved teaching and loved the French language.

Grant Simon, Mathematics teacher. Grant was 34 years old and had been teaching for eleven years, ten of which were at UHN. Although fairly traditional as an instructor, he had terrific rapport with his students. He remarked to a particularly restless young man, "This is why I do entry slips, so I can see if people know what they're doing." "Am I doing it right?" the boy asked. Grant smiled enigmatically and replied, "No." The student responded, "I can never tell if you're being sarcastic."

Bartholomew VanDerBeek, English and Theater teacher. Bartholomew began teaching English 15 years previously at the middle school level. He came to UHN eight years before the study. An actor by training, Bartholomew was very comfortable presenting, either in lecture format or one on one. I observed his acting class, where students were rehearsing stage combat routines. A pair of girls approached and one asked, "Mr. VanDerBeek, how can I kick her in the head?" He positioned the would-be victim on the floor and explained to both girls, "It's a 'see, two, three.'" As he spoke, he demonstrated, "*See* her," and he made eye contact with the girl on the floor, "*Two*," he placed two hands on either side of her head, "Three," he allowed the victim to complete the "assault" by controlling the motion toward his knee. He finished the movement by striking his own knee with his hands to create the sound of a blow. "Cool," the girls said and left to practice the move on their own. Bartholomew moved on to attend to other duos.

Overview of supervision and evaluation at Upland Hills District

The state of Illinois mandates that tenured teachers only be evaluated every other year and non-tenured teachers at least once every year (Illinois General Assembly, 2010). Upland Hills District instituted much more rigorous oversight of their faculty members. The observation and induction schedule for non-tenured certified faculty is outlined in Tables 3.5-3.7. The district enumerated the following purposes for their "appraisal" procedures:

- "to recognize, support, and reinforce effective teaching; to promote individual growth . . .;
- to provide a basis for employment and retention decisions; [and]
- to comply with provisions of Section 24A of *The School Code of Illinois*" (Upland Hills High School District, 2006, p. 1).

Whereas appraisal of experienced teachers focused on professional growth, goals for newer staff were the transmission of district culture and induction into the profession. All teachers,

regardless of years of experience or previous ratings, were required to implement a professional growth plan and undergo a formal observation minimally every other year. In none of the district‟s formal documentation did there emerge a sense that supervision and evaluation were ritualistic behaviors instituted to satisfy external mandates.

Overview of supervision and evaluation at Upland Hills North High School

Principal Anita Boyd was experienced enough to recognize that few plans, however brilliantly conceptualized, were implemented with complete fidelity. She was working to eliminate the inconsistencies in the appraisal system at Upland Hills. This work began with the induction of new administrators, all of whom were required by the state to undergo an orientation through the Regional Office of Education (ROE).

This orientation appeared to have undergone extensive revision in the past decade, based on the way it was described by administrators with varying amounts of experience. The comment below is representative of more senior administrators‟ comments:

> I know it‟s required but I don‟t know how helpful it was because I had no clue. It was the summer before I started being a department chair, so I‟d never been in a classroom to observe so it felt like all the training was book talk for me. I couldn‟t connect it to anything relevant, so I sat through the three days going, “Okay.”

On the other hand, Ruth Baye, who had attended the administrative orientation the summer prior to the interview, described a much more relevant and applicable experience:

> There were three parts basically: two days plus a day to observe at another school and do an actual observation . . . It was specifically about the evaluation process, and so it was a full day on training about the process and how to do the pre-[observation] conference, the observation, the post-[observation] conference and . . . then we had to go to another school and observe a teacher and go through the whole process with the teacher and then we came back for Part II, and there was some role playing, some sharing, also some additional practice. They showed us several videos of people teaching and we identified areas of future focus. So that was a pretty practical three-part workshop.

Table 3.5

New Teacher (No Experience) Appraisal and Induction Program, Upland Hills High School District

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Observations	By Department Chair:	By Department Chair:	By Department Chair:	By Department Chair:
	• Two formal observations[12], one of which consists of two observations of the same period on two consecutive days • Two informal contacts	• Two formal observations by DC, one of which consists of two observations of the same period on two consecutive days • Two informal contacts	One formal observation One informal contact	One formal observation One informal contact
	By Designated Admin.	By Designated Admin.	By Designated Admin.	By Designated Admin.
	• Two formal observations, one of which consists of two observations of the same period on two consecutive days • One informal contact	• One formal observation • One informal contact	One formal observation One informal contact	One informal contact

Induction	• Mentor program
	• 4 days district and building meetings
	• Building Orientation
	• Department Chair Orientation
	• Classroom visits (by teacher)
	  • 1 within the department
	  • 1 outside department
		Optional mentor program
		Classroom visits
		• 1 within the department
		• 1 outside department
			Classroom visits
			• 1 within the department
			• 1 outside department
				Classroom visits
				• 1 within the department
				• 1 outside department

	Professional Growth Portfolio • Lesson Plans (sample) reflection exercise • Peer observation reflection exercise with mentor • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Mentor/protégé reflection exercise • Personal Assessment	Professional Growth Portfolio • Initial draft Philosophy of Teaching • Lesson plan (sample) reflection exercise • Peer observation reflection exercise with Department Chair • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Mentor/protégé reflection or mid-year reflection • Personal Assessment	Professional Growth Portfolio • Abbreviated professional growth plan • Revised draft: Philosophy of Teaching • Student work samples • Unit plan (sample) reflection exercise • Peer observation reflection exercise • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Personal assessment	Professional Growth Portfolio • Abbreviated professional growth plan • Revised draft: Philosophy of Teaching • Student work samples • Unit plan (sample) reflection exercise • Self video reflection exercise or shadow a student for a day • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Personal assessment

[12] Formal observations include a pre-conference, observation, and post-conference. They are documented to the Personnel File using the Post Observation Form.

Table 3.6

New Teacher, Experience but no Previous Tenure Appraisal Schedule, Upland Hills High School District

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Observations	By Department Chair:	By Department Chair:	By Department Chair:	By Department Chair:
	• Two formal observations by DC, one of which consists of two observations of the same period on two consecutive days • Two informal contacts	• One formal observation • One informal contact	One formal observation One informal contact	One formal observation One informal contact
	By Designated Admin.	By Designated Admin.	By Designated Admin.	By Designated Admin.
	• One formal observation, one of which consists of two observations of the same period on two consecutive days • One informal contact	• One formal observation • One informal contact	One formal observation One informal contact	One informal contact
Induction	• Mentor program 4 days district and building meetings Professional Growth Portfolio • Draft of Philosophy of Teaching • Student work (sample) • Peer observation reflection exercise with Department Chair • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Mentor/protégé reflection exercise • Personal Assessment Building Orientation Department Chair Orientation Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 outside department	• Optional mentor program Professional Growth Portfolio • Abbreviated growth plan • Revised draft Philosophy of Teaching • Unit plan (sample) reflection exercise • Peer observation reflection exercise • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Personal Assessment Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 outside department	Professional Growth Portfolio • Abbreviated professional growth plan • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Personal assessment Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 outside department	Professional Growth Portfolio • Action research project (assessment) • Self video reflection exercise or shadow a student for a day • Family contact log • Professional growth log • Contributions to school and district log • Personal assessment Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 outside department

Table 3.7

New Teacher, Experience with Previous Tenure Appraisal Schedule, Upland Hills High School District

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Observations	By Department Chair: • One formal observation • One informal contact	By Department Chair: • One formal observation • One informal contact	By Department Chair: One formal observation One informal contact	By Department Chair: One formal observation One informal contact
	By Designated Admin. • One formal observation • One informal contact	By Designated Admin. • One formal observation • One informal contact	By Designated Admin. One informal contact	By Designated Admin. One informal contact
Induction	Mentor program 4 days district and building meetings Professional Growth Portfolio Building Orientation Department Chair Orientation Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 outside department	• Optional mentor program Professional Growth Portfolio Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 outside department	Professional Growth Portfolio Classroom visits • 1 within the department • 1 visit (Guidance/Pupil Services or Student Personnel)	Professional Growth Portfolio Classroom visits • Action research project

(Tables adapted from Upland Hills High School District, 2006, pp. 4-10)

Once part of Boyd‟s Administrative Council (AC), new administrators were walked through the generalities of the Upland Hills appraisal system, the cornerstone of which was Charlotte Danielson‟s *Framework for Teaching* (2007). This framework divides professional practice into four sections or "domains," outlined in Table 3.8

Table 3.8
A framework for teaching: Components of Professional Practice

Domain I: Planning & Preparation	Domain II: The Classroom Environment	Domain III: Instruction	Domain IV: Professional Responsibilities
• Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy • Demonstrating knowledge of students • Setting instructional outcomes • Demonstrating knowledge of resources • Designing coherent instruction • Designing student assessments	• Creating an environment of respect and rapport • Establishing a culture for learning • Managing classroom procedures • Managing student behavior • Organizing physical space	• Communicating with students • Using questioning and discussion techniques • Engaging students in learning • Using assessment in instruction • Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	• Reflecting on teaching • Maintaining accurate records • Communicating with families • Participating in a professional community • Growing and developing professionally • Showing professionalism

(The Danielson Group, n.d.)

According to Danielson‟s website, "The *Framework* may be used for many purposes, but its full value is realized as the foundation for professional conversations among practitioners as they seek to enhance their skill in the complex task of teaching." It was in this spirit that formal evaluations at UHN took place. Administrators were expected to evaluate the act of teaching in light of the four domains.

Boyd conducted a series of workshops and administrative academies designed to address specific issues she had identified as problematic and to provide newcomers with models of best administrative practice. Some of these workshops took place during the AC‟s weekly hour-long

meeting. Boyd also used the summer administrative academy or provided release time during the school year for more elaborate, time-intensive projects.

One such project involved pairs of administrators who observed the same teacher, someone outside either person‟s subject area. Each administrator developed a list of identified strengths and areas of future focus and then shared these observations with their partners. The exercise was intended to provide insight into whether administrators were seeing the same issues and evaluating them in similar fashion. Administrators then met with the observed teacher and presented their findings in an unofficial postobservation conference. Some administrators were made uneasy by the final step, but all found the exercise illuminating. One department chair commented, "The teacher we saw I didn‟t think was superb . . . but I was excited to see this teacher because she has a reputation in the school as being as being a pretty strong teacher." The implication of this comment was that teacher reputations were the result of highly subjective, not necessarily accurate, criteria. Boyd described the process as "eye-opening" and had plans to continue it in the future.

Her current focus was on improving the quality and value of the postobservation write-ups. She cited a number of reasons for this focus. She granted that the written evaluations provided legal documentation in the event that the administration wished to remove an ineffective teacher from the classroom. More importantly, however, Boyd believed that evaluations should serve as a resource for teachers. Boyd wanted evaluators to create future focus statements that not only identified areas where growth was needed but also helped foster this growth. As principal, she read all the evaluations and commented on the type of future focus statements she used to see: ""Incorporate more technology in your classroom." What does that really mean? How does that really help?"

Through discussion and the willingness of administrators to share examples of written evaluations they had prepared, the quality of the write-ups had been improving and becoming more consistent. The process has also eased the transition into administration for newer members of the AC. Still, Boyd conceded, there remained improvements to be made. As she read some of the evaluations, she found herself asking, "Where's the reflection that we talked about? I don't remember saying it was optional."

While Danielson's (2007) *Framework for Teaching* served as the focus for evaluations, teacher reflection was the linchpin of conference interactions at UHN. Boyd requested that, immediately following an observation, administrators send their teachers a list of questions for reflection, a sample of which can be found in Appendix B, as well as their field notes from the observed lesson. Using the latter and their own recollections, teachers were expected to come to the postobservation conference prepared to discuss the observed lesson in light of the questions for reflection. Within a few days of the conference, teachers were to send the supervisor an electronic version of their reflections, which was then cut and pasted into the final evaluation and became part of the official documentation of their observation.

The reflection questions were designed to allow teachers to guide these discussions. They also encouraged teachers to process actively what steps they might take to remedy problems or allow continued success. Boyd explained,

> More and more the department chairs have tried to give more ownership of the conversation to the person being observed and then interject or weigh in or respond to questions or give suggestions or whatever where it seemed to make sense during that time or kind of at the end or the second half [of the conference].

Here, again, Boyd allowed that this uninterrupted reflection was an ideal toward which the team was striving: "It is my *recommendation* . . . It is my *suggestion* in the workshops. I am quite sure it doesn't happen completely across the board." Part of the challenge, Boyd suggested, was

in administrators‟ abilities to self-monitor and curb their impulses to jump into the conversation prematurely. Another obstacle was in the ability of teachers to practice self-reflection, an area in which there was huge variation. Boyd confessed, “I have been impressed with some of the reflection that some of the . . . staff have done and not so impressed with others.”

Data Analysis

From the participants at UHN, I collected just over 14 hours of audio-recordings. The interviews totaled approximately 10 hours and 20 minutes, ranging in length from a low of 22 minutes to a high of 1 hour and 4 minutes. The median supervisor interview was 50 minutes long while the median teacher interview ran 33 ½ minutes. Conferences totaled slightly less than 4 hours and ranged in length from 17 to 47 minutes. The mean conference length was approximately 29 minutes. In addition to audio data, I also gathered a number of documents, including official evaluations, answers to questions for reflection, the district‟s appraisal procedures, and classroom artifacts. These data were analyzed and integrated into the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of this document.

Analytic induction

LeCompte (2000) identified several steps in data analysis, among them 1) finding items, 2) creating stable sets of items, 3) creating patterns from these sets, and 4) assembling structures from patterns. In this study, step one began during transcription. As conferences were transcribed, I created memos in which I made note of areas in the dialogue that seemed likely to evoke confusion or misapprehension on either participant‟s part and how my own understanding about the conferences was evolving. Once transcribed, conferences were audited again at normal speed. The mircroanalysis that attends listening to audio recordings at reduced speed can cause what Labov and Fanshel (1977) identified as a microanalysis/aggression paradox. Simply put,

the more closely a researcher examines an interaction, the more likely the researcher is to interpret the behavior negatively.

This second audit of the conference allowed assessment of the accuracy of the ideas noted in the first set of memos. Those portions of the transcript that remained areas of interest were flagged as items for further study and were also turned into individual audio files for use during follow-up interviews. Using Audacity software, I created three audio clips for each of five conferences and two clips for the remaining three conferences. The 21 clips had running times of between 19 seconds and 2:36. The average clip ran approximately 1:20. Most clips contained speech that I thought likely to result in confusion or disagreement. I also created clips that represented negative cases, speech I interpreted as fairly clear and unlikely to lead to misunderstanding.

I customized the interview protocol for each participant, writing follow-up questions specific to their conferences. For example, one supervisor opted not to request an explanation of a teacher‟s use of the phrase "I‟m able to go with the flow," so I asked him what he thought that expression meant. Likewise, I asked the teacher what she had meant by it. In an effort not to bias participants or affect their memories in favor of any particular hypotheses, I had intended first to ask participants to relate their overall impressions of the conference. Only after they had answered this more general question would the stimulated recall portion of the interview begin.. Unfortunately, because of the delay between the conferences and the interviews, in some cases as much as two months, I was forced to reverse this order, especially when interviewing the supervisors, a detail that has been noted in the limitations portion of this chapter.

Immediately following each interview or classroom observation, I wrote a memo in which I recorded a detailed description of the event, my visceral response to it, questions that

arose from it, new understandings I could take from it, and possible areas of inquiry either for this or future projects. Because of the compressed timeframe of my data collection, I did not begin transcribing interviews until I had conducted them all, another factor I have noted in the limitations section of this chapter.

I transcribed all 17 interviews within the space of 2 weeks and then wrote detailed summaries of each which I then sent to the participants for their feedback. Most found my interpretation of our discussions accurate and gave their approval without any reservations. A few requested minor emendations which I made. One participant never responded despite several follow-up e-mails. Because my summary of her interview and conference contained nothing controversial, I opted to view her silence as consent.

Major themes and categories revealed themselves as I wrote the summaries. Teachers‟ opinions of their conferences were fairly easily identified as either negative or positive. Positive conferences were those in which the teacher and the supervisor shared a common vision of what had happened during the observed lesson and what courses of action should ensue, while negative conferences contained no such shared vision. Three conferences of each type occurred. The teachers in the two remaining conferences characterized them as fairly neutral, although one described the supervision process as a ritual he would not choose to continue in its current form, and the other described the supervisor‟s behavior as "just kind of reinforcing things that went well." Thus, even the neutral conferences leaned either positive or negative.

Having established two extremely broad, general descriptors for conferences, I resumed the task of finding and stabilizing lists of items (LeCompte, 2000). I began a line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2006) of the conferences and interviews in an effort to name behaviors and to increase my intimacy with the data. As I continued coding, I also turned my attention to looking "for

categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories, developing . . . hypotheses upon an examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining them on the basis of subsequent cases" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p. 57). Clusters of behaviors evolved into more stable semantic relationships (Spradley, 1979).

Semantic Relationships

Spradley established a list of relationships between items or phenomena that allow researchers to "identify and clarify descriptions of items systematically" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 149). Listed below are Spradley's (1979) semantic relationships, not all of which were used in this study.

1) X is a kind of Y
2) X is a part of Y
3) X is a characteristic of Y
4) X is a place in Y
5) X is a place for doing Y
6) X is a result of Y
7) X is a cause of Y
8) X is a reason for Y
9) X is used for Y
10) X is a way to do Y
11) X is a stage or step in Y

X is a kind of Y. Examining codes through this algorithm allowed me to collapse categories more efficiently and effectively. The first conference yielded 51 codes, too many to be useful. Working from the bottom up, I first chunked them into obvious groups. For example, "praise" could be specific, vague, negative, without evidence, or overstated. In so doing, I reduced the number of codes to 34, still too many. I began playing "fill in the blank," substituting words for variables, e.g., Praise is a kind of _____. Ultimately, praise became a type of positive feedback, along with such other codes as "affirmation" and "denial of teacher

self-criticism." By compressing codes in this fashion, the original 51 were reduced to 6. I continued to do this with each successive line-by-line coding of conferences.

X is a part of Y. With a more manageable number of codes in place, I was then able to move to the next algorithm and replace the variable Y with "a postobservation conference," arriving at categories that would answer my first research question. When I took a hard look at my codes, I found that most of them involved supervisor behaviors, namely how they administered feedback and how teachers responded to it. In fact, almost all supervisor behaviors could have been contained in the single category "feedback." Collapsing the codes to that extent did not allow for a particularly nuanced examination of the data, though, so I looked at both supervisors and teachers in terms of the types of speech acts performed. For the most part, supervisors asked questions and gave directions. Teacher speech was largely limited to types of responses to questions and directions. Figure 3.3 contains the hierarchy of categories that answer Research Question 1: What occurs during a postobservation conference between a teacher and supervisor?

X is a reason for Y. Having established what happened during conferences, I then turned my attention to the second and third research questions:

- What meanings and understandings does each participant construct from these conferences?
- What factors may account for any disparities between participants in meanings and understandings

The answers to the first of these questions had revealed themselves when I wrote and received confirmation of the summaries of each participant"s interview and conference experience. While there were numerous idiosyncratic (mis)understandings, I opted to focus on those that 1) appeared more than once and 2) represented what I believed was a major threat or benefit to conference efficacy:

- I don‟t value your feedback;
- I don‟t understand your feedback; and,
- I have a lot of changes to make.

The preceding statements replaced the variable Y, and I, once again, filled in the blanks for X.

The codes I had developed were of limited value in this endeavor as they were too minutely focused on individual speech acts. To get a sense of their overall structure, I reread the conferences in full and divided them into "scenes" based on the topics discussed. Scenes were labeled by beginning and ending line numbers, offering me a quantifiable view of what was discussed and for how long. Table 3.9 is Hal and Lauren‟s conference, divided into scenes. Lauren had expressed her belief that conferences were too focused on what she did wrong. When viewed scenically, I was able to see quite clearly how classroom management in general, and the subject of Darrin in particular, dominated the conference.

Table 3.9
Sample of scenic breakdown of conference

Sc. #	Lines	Topic
1	5-50	Initial report by Lauren
2	51-100	"Darrin"
3	101-195	Completion of initial report by Lauren
4	196-205	Hal‟s acknowledgement of Lauren‟s report
5	206-257	" How do you solve a problem like Darrin?"
6	258-283	Discussion of clutter on the desks
7	284-295	"The Trouble with Darrin"
8	296-309	Problems of classroom management
9	310-316	"That Darned Darrin"
10	317-327	Problem with student engagement
11	327-339	Commendations
12	340-367	Plan for follow-up between Hal and Lauren
13	368-384	Issues of classroom management
14	385-393	Summation

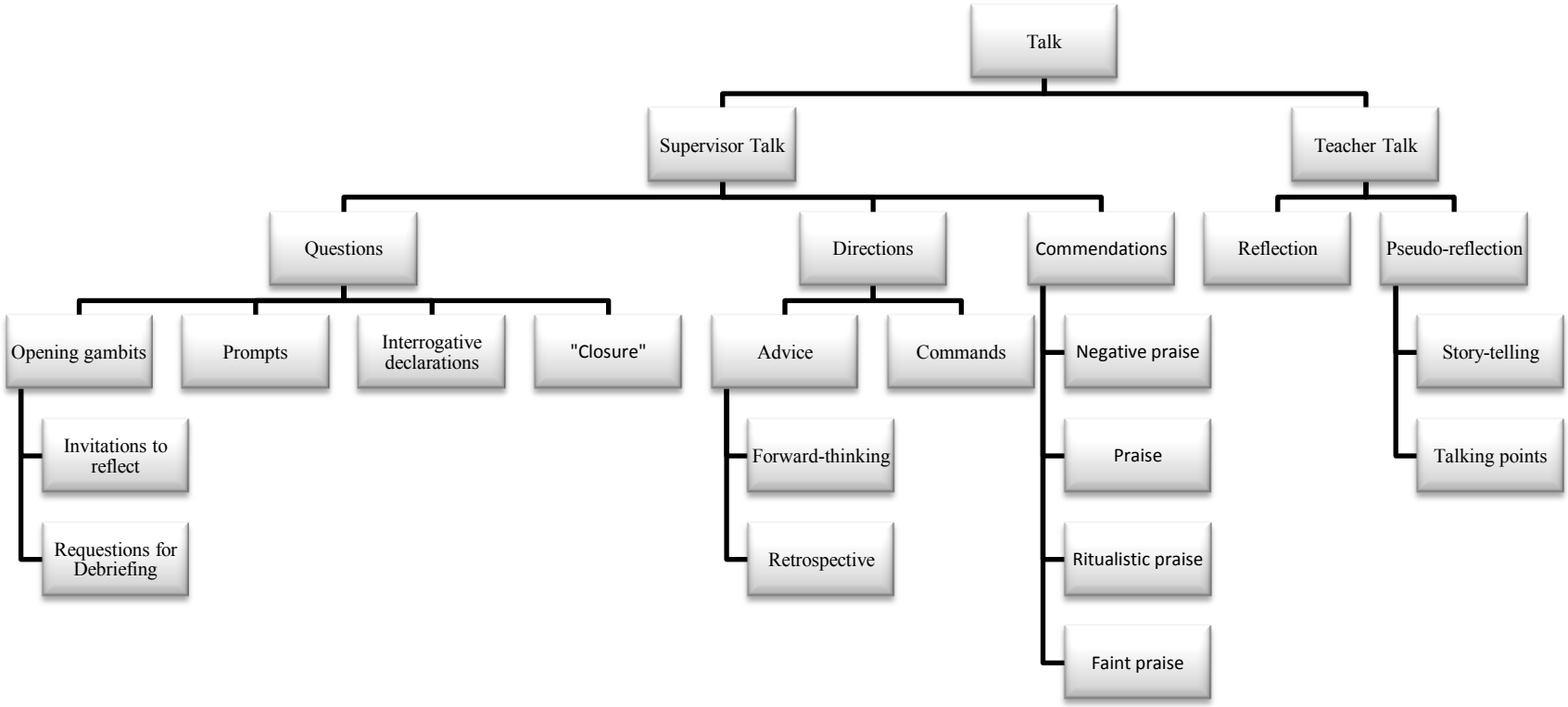

Figure 3.3. What occurs during a postobservation conference between a teacher and supervisor?

Conversation and discourse analysis in action

As mentioned previously, some of the audio clips were selected because the manner in which speakers phrased themselves seemed likely to lead to misunderstanding. Those clips, as well as portions of conferences where participants appeared to be having trouble making themselves understood, were coded using Brown and Levinson‟s (1978) politeness theory terminology. Figure 3.4 includes the politeness strategies that occurred most frequently and will, therefore, be mentioned most often in Chapter 4.

Hedging
Exaggeration or overstatement
Minimization of imposition through understatement
Attempts to establish common ground
Deference
Loaded or rhetorical questions

Figure 3.4. Politeness strategies used most often by participants in the current study

Portions of some conferences revealed tensions between the participants or idiosyncratic behavior on one participant‟s part that could be rendered visible only through further transcription using the conventions developed by Jefferson (2004) to show such para-linguistic elements as prosody, pauses, inflection, speech, and volume. I did this on an as-needed basis. The transcription conventions are included in the introduction to Chapter 4 to increase their reference value to the reader.

Trustworthiness

When discussing a study‟s trustworthiness, the terms “reliability” and “validity” are typically invoked. In positivist research, reliability refers to the replicability of a study, whether a second research study, employing the same methods, would arrive at the same results (Merriam, 2002). Internal validity asks whether researchers are measuring what they purport to

measure, while external validity refers to a study‟s generalizability, “the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (Merriam, 2002, p. 28).

In the social sciences, some of these definitions are problematic (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Merriam, 2002). For a number of reasons, a qualitative study‟s findings are unlikely ever to be replicated. Reliability is often dependent on the accuracy of a measurement instrument, but in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument and cannot be “calibrated” to arrive at the same results as all other researchers. More importantly, “human behavior is never static” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 35).

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) explained that “some factors confounding the credibility of findings in experimental designs are inapplicable to ethnographic research; others need to be defined in special ways” (p. 32). For purposes of the current study, “reliability” was defined as the extent to which “the results [were] consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27) and “validity” as “comparability and translatability of findings rather than . . . outright transference to groups not investigated” (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 34).

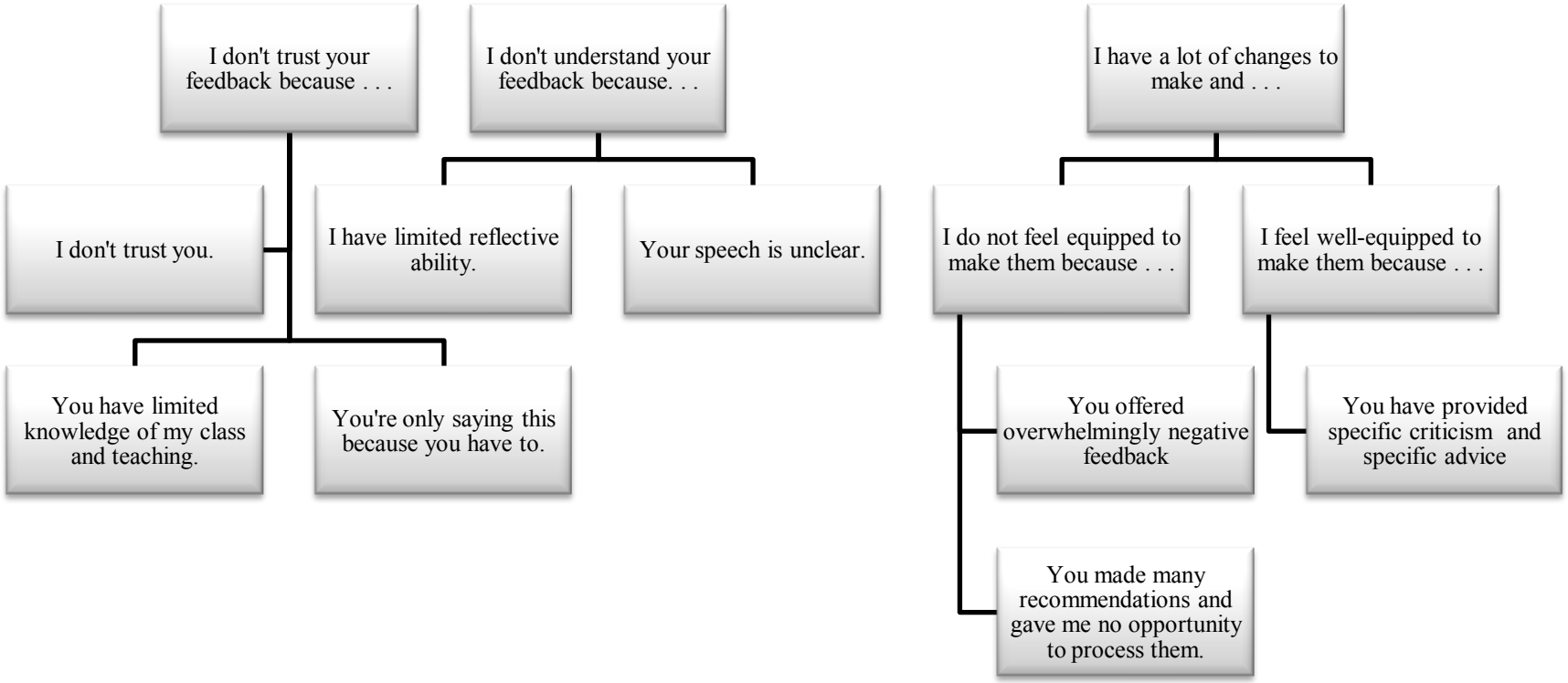

Figure 3.5. What meanings and understandings does each participant construct from these conferences? What factors may account for any disparities between participants in meanings and understandings?

In ethnographic research, claims of external validity can be made only if "the ethnographer delineate[s] the characteristics of the group studied or constructs generated so clearly that they can serve as a basis for comparison with other like and unlike groups" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 34). To that end, I have provided comprehensive descriptions of this study's participants and the site. In addition, the findings include extensive excerpts from conference and interview transcripts, thereby allowing readers of the study to compare the interactions of the study participants to other similar or different individuals.

To enhance reliability, the researcher must "specify precisely what was done" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 36). Reliability also "requires explicit identification of the assumptions and metatheories that underlie choice of terminology and methods of analysis" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 39). This study has been meticulously documented, start to finish, by an audit trail (Merriam, 2002). Included in this trail are journal entries reflecting my questions, concerns, disappointments, victories, procedures, and growing understandings. Also present are all analytic memos I created during data collection and analysis as well as all written communication with study participants.

Engagement of biases

Among the threats to a qualitative study's reliability is the imposition of the researcher's biases without the researcher's awareness. Cogan (1973) voiced tremendous skepticism in the individual's ability to observe and record data accurately: "People make errors in seeing. If they barely see something, they invent the rest. They see what they want to see (p. 35). Even "accurate" raw data are interpretations (Geertz, 1973; Van Maanen, 1988; Van Manen, 1990). Van Maanen (1988) went so far as to call them "interpretations of other interpretations" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 95), possibly an homage to Geertz's (1973) characterization of data as

"constructions of other people's constructions" (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). Geertz elaborated that the components essential to understanding most human interactions are in place before the interaction ever takes place. People‟s backgrounds, the emotional and intellectual baggage that they bring to an encounter have everything to do with the meanings they ascribe to it. Ezzy (2002), likewise, noted, "People's preexisting meanings and interpretive frameworks are the dominant influences on what people do and observe" (p. 6).

Peshkin (1988) warned that those meanings and frameworks "have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination" (p. 17). He further urged researchers to engage in "a formal, systematic monitoring of self" (p. 20) so that they may be "mindful of [their subjectivities‟] enabling and disabling potential" (p. 18). Peshkin offered a methodology for how he identified and managed his subjectivities. First, he made a point of being aware of the emergence of "warm and . . . cool spots" (p. 18), strong feelings either for or against his subjects. Whenever such feelings arose, he wrote a memo which became part of what he called a "subjectivity audit" (p. 18). Similarly, Schwandt (2000) explained that "reaching an understanding is not a matter of setting aside, escaping, managing, or tracking one's own standpoint, prejudgments, biases, or prejudices. On the contrary, understanding requires the *engagement* of one's biases" (p. 195, emphasis added). We cannot free ourselves from biases, but we can make ourselves aware of them and rein in the ones that "disable our efforts to understand others" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 195).

Taking a page from both Schwandt (2000) and Peshkin (1988), I used the preliminary memo writing as a forum to vent any frustrations I felt with either the teachers or the supervisors. I made no effort to curb my subjectivities or maintain academic diction during this process. At

various points, I referred to one participant as "unsupervisor-y" and another as "an utter dolt." Having written an inflammatory, judgmental statement, I would then follow it up with a question and thereby begin a written dialogue with myself that not only sensitized me to my own expectations but allowed me to explore whether these expectations were appropriate. This process also helped me to keep separate my analysis of conference behaviors, which was the focus of the study, and my desire to analyze and evaluate teaching behaviors, which was not. Below are excerpts from two successive memos on the same conference. The former was written during transcription, the latter while listening to the conference a second time:

> I"m really pissed. [The supervisor] finally returns to discussing the observation and loads kudos on [the teacher] for his classroom management skills. [The teacher] just got through telling him how much difficulty he has managing the earlier class, yet this is not addressed. Does [the teacher] think he is good at managing student behavior or not? Does [the supervisor] think the problems in the earlier class are a function of "bad" kids?
>
> I"m getting better at curbing my own inclination to critique the teaching and focus on the conference. [The teacher] places all the responsibility for his students" bad behavior on them, and doesn"t ask for assistance in how to manage them. That"s not good teaching, but that"s not my business, either. This conference is a total outlier. It"s going to be interesting.

At the advice of my committee, I also wrote a subjectivities statement (Appendix A) to inform both myself and my readers of my potential biases.

Triangulation of data sources

An additional step toward enhancing reliability was the use of triangulation, another term often used imprecisely (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). As the term is employed in the current study, it refers to my use of multiple methods to verify or clarify hypotheses. I first "observed" study participants during conferences. Subsequently, participants were interviewed individually, at which time they reviewed the events of the postobservation conference and answered questions

that allowed me to refine inchoate hypotheses. Whenever possible, I cross-referenced the content of the conferences and interviews with the teacher‟s written evaluation.

Transcripts of conferences were not provided to participants prior to their interviews primarily because I did not wish to influence the responses I received in the interviews. Study participants might have been inclined to review the transcripts immediately prior to being interviewed, thus making their recollections of the conferences appear more complete or detailed than they actually were. Some might have prepared rationales for their own or their partner‟s behaviors. In an attempt to gather untainted interview data, I thought it more appropriate not to provide transcripts. As noted in the limitations section of this chapter, this decision was not entirely successful. I attempted to mitigate the damage by inviting my participants to evaluate the accuracy of my interpretations and make whatever changes they deemed appropriate.

Member checks

LeCompte (2000) analogized sorting data with "sifting flour to remove weevils" (p. 148), a time-consuming and odious task. A verbatim transcript, with its pauses, interruptions, repairs, and other "noise," is difficult to read and does not provide much useful data prior to analysis. Out of respect for the participants‟ time and the desire to obtain useful information, the weevils were first removed, and only then were participants asked to confirm or correct the accuracy of the researcher‟s interpretations.

I wrote detailed summaries of each participant‟s interview with me. Summaries included background and contextual information about the participant, their expressed views about the supervision process in general, and their reflections on the particular conference. This summary was e-mailed to the participant for approval or alteration. All but one participant responded. Most requested no changes. A few requested minor changes. Only one individual‟s comments

suggested that I had genuinely misunderstood something he said. The topic of the misunderstanding is not included in the text of this document.

Member reactions to verbatim transcripts. I included with the summary a transcript of our one-on-one interviews, noting that the participants might wish to refer to it as part of checking my accuracy. Their reactions confirmed some of my fears about how "civilians" react to verbatim transcripts. Those who did attempt to read the transcript expressed embarrassment at how they sounded. The remarks below are representative:

- "Oh, Lord! This could be incriminating if used to evaluate my command of the English language."
- I did not realize how lazy I can be in conversation with the "ums" and "you knows." I now have another area for self-improvement.
- I didn"t have the patience or the stomach to read much of the transcript (too many "ums").

One participant, not surprisingly one of several current or former English teachers in the sample, edited the transcript, inserting punctuation and highlighting the repetition and repair typical of verbatim speech but which this individual attributed to "the mic [that] must have goofed a couple of times." Although I know this person possesses a keen sense of the ridiculous, I cannot say with certainty that the previous statement was a joke.

Minimization of researcher presence

Van Maanen (1988) explained that data do not simply exist; they are created by the interaction between the researcher and the individuals or objects being researched. These constructions are then mediated through, among other factors, "the fieldworker's mere presence on the scene as an observer and participant" (p. 95). To minimize the effect of my presence on the study, the recording device was placed as unobtrusively as possible during both the conferences and the interviews, with the expectation that participants would forget the device was present and speak normally. For the most part, this plan was successful, although three

participants from three separate dyads made mention of the effect the recording equipment had on the conference content. I have noted these comments in the limitations section of this chapter.

Researcher presence can affect study outcomes in more subtle ways than those implied above. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) observed, "Because ethnographic data depends on the social relationship of researcher with subjects, research reports must clearly identify the researcher's role and status within the group investigated" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38). I attempted to maintain a strictly observational, non-participatory stance. Instances during which I felt a blurring of the line between observer and participant have been documented in the limitations section below.

Limitations of the Study

As I have alluded above, the study is imperfect. The selection process and sample size are problematic. Likewise, the limited time spent in the field and the delays between conferences and interviews affected the quality of the data. I developed a personal bias in favor of one of my subjects, which may have colored my analysis of some data. Finally, several participants noted their awareness of the recording equipment and how that affected their conference behavior.

Size and selection process

Although much can learned from detailed investigations of small samples (Merriam, 1995), the homogeneity of this sample prevents drawing any definitive conclusions from it. While patterns appeared, they may be unique to this group of teachers and supervisors. The sample is further tainted by the lack of systematicity in its selection. Given the amount of travel involved, I bristle at calling this a convenience sample, which Patton (2002) described as "easy to access and inexpensive to study" (p. 242). A case, albeit a weak one, could be made for deeming the sample "opportunistic," which "takes advantage of whatever unfolds as it unfolds"

(Patton, 2002, p. 240). Appendix C provides a detailed account of how events unfolded that made data collection in Georgia an impossibility. What the sample is called, however, matters a great deal less than what its strengths are. I instituted no selection criteria other than the fact that teachers must be currently practicing and that the school should want me. As a result, my sample lacks optimal homogeneity. I have an assortment of teachers with different experience levels and subject areas; my supervisors are likewise heterogeneous. The more varied my participants, the less representative I must assume any one of their remarks is (Guest et al., 2006).

Time and distance

My decision to collect data in Illinois impeded the study in several ways. First, it prevented me from remaining in the field long enough to collect and analyze the data in a manner that would most fully serve the needs of the study. To maximize efficiency and minimize expense, I arranged to have the postobservation conferences recorded in my absence and the audio files e-mailed to me. I transcribed and conducted preliminary analyses of the conferences in Georgia and traveled to Illinois only after all the conferences had been completed. I conducted all 17 interviews over the course of 1 week.

While I gathered extremely rich data, I was not at leisure to transcribe and analyze any single conference before beginning another. As a result, I was unable to follow up in person on themes that revealed themselves once I began the transcription process in earnest. For example, midway through the interview process, one of the supervisors revealed his tremendous aversion for the amount of time required to complete the formal written evaluations. Up to that point, I had not considered how the written evaluation and the conference complemented each other. The emphasis at UHN was currently on accurate and thorough written evaluations, but my

instincts told me that teachers placed more import on what was said in conference. With more time, I would have revised my interview protocol to investigate this line of inquiry and followed up in person with individuals I had already interviewed.

My absence from the field made it impossible to interact personally with the participants once I returned to Georgia. I requested member checks via e-mail, and, while most participants were very responsive and gracious, one was completely non-responsive. I elected to assume my interpretation of her interview was accurate since a glaring inaccuracy would likely have prompted a response. More problematic was the collection of evaluation documents. I asked all the teachers if they would be willing to share their written evaluations with me, and most agreed, but few had them in their possession at the time of the interviews. I collected two such evaluations before leaving Illinois and then requested the others by e-mail. I was sent two more electronically. I did not receive documents from the others, and opted after the second round of follow-up e-mails to abandon their pursuit as I did not wish to become a cyber-nag.

One final problem arose when a participant expressed some ambivalence about having her data included in the study. While she did not rescind her consent, I felt ethically bound to investigate more fully her comfort level. I would like to have done so in person but was restricted to e-mail correspondence. I provided my home phone number so we could talk directly, but I still feared my efforts might be viewed as tactical. Her concerns indicated a need for personal interaction and reassurance that I was unable to provide. By the time I delivered a final draft of this document to my committee, she had not responded and her data remain part of this document.

The delay between the conferences and my interviews also negatively affected the data. Table 3.10, which presents the timeline of this process, from observation through the one-on-one

interview with each participant, shows significant gaps between the interviews and the postobservation conferences that were the subject of those interviews. The briefest delay was just under two weeks, but Lynn and Colleen‟s interviews were conducted nearly two months after their conference.

Table 3.10
Timeline for data generation and collection

Teacher name Supervisor(s) name	Observation	Postobservation conference	Interview
Lynn McFarley Colleen Davidson	1/20	1/25/10	3/19 3/15
Al Harris Moira Cole	1/21-22	1/26/10	3/18 3/17
Lucy Miller Anita Boyd	1/28-29	2/1/10	3/19 3/16
Molly Sheridan Mike Strauss Ruth Baye	2/2	2/8 /10	3/16 3/16 3/17
Lauren Hart Hal Bennington	2/4-5	2/12/10	3/15 3/18
Bartolomew VanDerBeek Brenda Margolis	2/11	2/16/10	3/15 3/19
Holly Anderson Allegra Del Amitri	2/12	2/22/10	3/15 3/18
Grant Simon Phin Carson	3/4	3/5/10	3/16 3/18

The most notable effect of the delays was memory loss. In the case of teachers, I did not find this a tremendous problem. Teachers had only a single conference to remember and, therefore, had less trouble recalling details. Anything they could not recall became data of a different sort. Assuming that the discussions in the postobservation conferences were expected to have lasting impact, the fact that teachers could not remember what was discussed pointed to an absence of such impact.

Administrators‟ memories, however, were more troubling. Most administrators conducted multiple conferences. The English, mathematics, and science departments had 21, 19,

and 17 faculty members, respectively. Consequently, many administrators were unable to remember details, not because they had not thought them important but because those details became conflated with points made in conferences with other teachers who were not part of my sample. I tried to remedy the memory issue by changing the order of my interview protocol. My original intention had been to ask supervisors to summarize the main points they wanted the teachers to take from the conference before I asked them to listen to the audio clips. Without exception, however, when I posed the question, "What were the major points you wanted to make during the conference?" every supervisor paused and stared somewhat vacantly toward an area just over my head. I offered them the option of listening to the audio clips first and answering questions specific to them as a way to refresh their memories, and all accepted this option.

I would have obtained richer data from the supervisors had I conducted the interviews sooner. Failing that, I should have recommended that supervisors review their conference notes prior to our interviews. Out of a desire to create as little extra work for my participants as possible, I refrained from doing so, even though several e-mailed me asking if they should prepare anything for the interview. Though well-intended, this decision adversely affected my data.

Personal bias

I have included a subjectivities statement (Appendix A) so that readers can evaluate how my personal and professional history may have affected my interpretation of the data. While I believe I have rendered a fair and accurate portrayal of events, I must admit to having developed some protective feelings for one of my participants. Lauren, a first-year teacher, volunteered in our interview that she had been released from her contract for the following year. I was moved

and extremely grateful that, despite this fact, she consented to continue with the study. In addition, her experiences recalled those of my best friend, who, several years earlier, had been fired from her teaching position. I was angry on Lauren‟s behalf in the same way that I had been angry for Shawna.[13] I became even more of a champion for Lauren after watching her teach. I found her delivery engaging and informative. She was able to present a physics concept in such a way that I, a former English teacher, got the right answer and understood what the answer meant.

I have used quite a few excerpts from Hal and Lauren‟s conference, and, while I admit to disapproving of Hal‟s approach, I am also cognizant of Lauren‟s deficiencies. I have tried very hard not to cast Hal as a villain, offering alternative explanations for behaviors that appear anathema to productive supervision. I should also point out that I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Hal. It was he who came up with the idea of e-mailing audio files to me, the process that allowed this study to take place. For these reasons, I believe the reader can trust my treatment of Hal and Lauren‟s relationship.

My previous relationships with two other participants should also be noted. Appendix A details my history with Anita, who gave me my first teaching job. She was and remains a mentor, a role model, and a friend. Bartholomew and I have known each other for over 20 years, beginning when I was an undergraduate and he a graduate student at the University of North Carolina. I am friends with him and his wife and have attended social events in their home.

[13] This name is not a pseudonym. When asked if she wanted her identity shared, Shawna provided her full name, Shawna Colleen Gallagher, and began reading off her social security number.

Presence of recording equipment

Although most participants seemed unaffected by the presence of a recording device, a few remarked on its effect on the data. One supervisor offered that the brevity of her conference was due, in part, to the participants‟ awareness of being recorded:

> I have to say honestly when you tape it, that that was very awkward . . . It wasn‟t as though there was anything negative I was refraining from saying. It‟s just that for both of us [it] felt. . . I don‟t think the word is “forced,” but maybe the word is “artificial.”

This supervisor went on to offer an alternative explanation for the conference‟s brevity, that the lesson she observed was not particularly complex. A second supervisor also used the term “awkward” to describe the response to the microphone. She offered that the teacher gave her consent to be recorded but commented, “I don‟t think it‟ll be as rich as a discussion [if] we‟re recording it.” During the conference, this supervisor addressed several comments directly into the microphone to me, clearly indicating she never surrendered her awareness of being recorded.

More troubling was the assessment of one of the teachers that the presence of the recording equipment substantively changed the tenor and content of the conference. The teacher admitted that she decided not to argue with her supervisor because she did not want that behavior recorded. She also suggested that the supervisor was much nicer to her and conducted herself more professionally than was typical because the conference was being recorded.

Despite these limitations, I remain confident in the trustworthiness of my findings. I vetted Chapter 4 through two individuals outside my committee and asked for specific feedback on assertions that did not appear supported by the data. These readers were not members of the academy, thus less liable to unconsciously fill in areas I left underdeveloped. When I failed to provide sufficient explanation or support for assumptions, they were quick to let me know. I have provided numerous, fairly lengthy passages from the conferences so that readers may also

judge the soundness of my assertions. I have been punctilious in the phrasing of my conclusions to remind the reader that most are provisional at best, and some are purely speculative.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the study was to discern 1) what happened in postobservation conferences, 2) what meanings the participants constructed from the conferences, and 3) what were the sources of any disparity in those meanings. In the preceding chapter, the data collection and analysis methods are detailed. In brief, however, the postobservation conferences of 7 teacher-supervisor dyads and 1 triad were audio-recorded, and the 17 individual participants were subsequently interviewed regarding their interpretations of, feelings about, and intentions for what occurred during the conferences.

This chapter is organized in the following manner. First, supervisor speech and teacher speech were categorized and described to answer the first guiding question: What happens during postobservation conferences? Then, research questions two and three were answered in tandem, as it was unproductive to separate the construction of disparate meanings from the causes of these disparities. This section of the chapter is divided into three parts, corresponding with the three major meaning categories that emerged:

1. I don‟t value your feedback;
2. I don‟t understand your feedback; and,
3. I have a lot of changes to make.

Finally, a summary of the major findings is included.

Transcription notation

To aid the reader‟s understanding, I have taken the following steps when reproducing participant speech. Portions from conferences are labeled as “Excerpts” and are set up in tabular form with either two or three columns. The number in the far left column denotes the

"utterance," allowing me to refer to a specific portion of the speech in the narrative that follows the excerpted portion. Such references are typically noted in parentheses, following the narration, e.g., "Anita then offers an apology (U3)," meaning that the apology occurred in Utterance 3. In the event that two speakers are present, the center column names the speaker.

Finally, the right column contains the excerpted speech. These passages are printed in `Courier New` font, a choice that serves two purposes. First, it allows for quick visual identification of the passage as having come from a conference, as opposed to an interview. Additionally, because all its characters are the same width, Courier simplifies the task of aligning overlapping dialogue.

For most conference passages, I have employed Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions (Table 4.1) to reveal not only content but also prosody, inflection, and other para-linguistic elements that contribute to the understanding of what is—and is not—said. In cases where content was my sole concern, I did not use Jefferson's transcription, as it can impede passage readability. In those instances, I have also exercised the option to "clean up" the speech, removing such elements as hesitation tokens (e.g., um) and hedges (e.g., you know, like). Portions from the one-on-one interviews appear in the same Times New Roman font as the rest of this document and have also undergone the above "laundering" process.

What Happens During Postobservation Conferences?

At the risk of committing a tautology, what happens during postobservation conferences is talk: teacher talk and supervisor talk. As Table 4.2 indicates, supervisors generally spoke more than teachers, sometimes significantly more. I have reserved much of the discussion of the nuances of supervisor speech for the next section of this chapter in which I examine how participants constructed meaning from the conference. This section identifies and describes the

Table 4.1
Jeffersonian transcription conventions

Symbol	Meaning
[ ]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech. They are aligned to mark the precise position of overlap.
Underlining	Indicates emphasis
Yeh,	Comma indicates a weak rising inflection.
y'know?	Question mark signals stronger „questioning" intonation than comma.
Yeh.	A period marks a falling, stopping intonation, irrespective of grammar, and not necessarily followed by a pause.
↑ ↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement, over and above normal rhythms of speech. They are used for notable changes in pitch beyond those represented by periods, commas, and question marks.
(.)	A micropause, audible but too short to measure.
(2.0)	A timed pause, in this case two seconds
she wa::nted	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound; the more colons, the more elongation.
hh.	Audible exhale. Number of Hs are used proportionally.
.hh	Audible inhale. Number of Hs are used proportionally.
bu-u-	Hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
>he said<	"Greater than" and "lesser than" signs enclose speech that is significantly faster than the speech surrounding it. Occasionally they are used the other way around for slower talk.
solid.= We had	"Equals" signs mark the immediate "latching" of successive talk, whether of one or more speakers, with no interval
sto(h)p i(h)t	Laughter within speech is signalled by Hs in parentheses.
g	The G flanked by asterisks denotes a non-descript guttural sound, usually a mark of hesitation.
((stoccato))	Double parentheses are used to offset additional comments from the transcriber.

Adapted from Hepburn and Potter (2009)

major discourse categories. In the case of supervisors, there were three: questions, directions, and commendations.

Supervisor Talk

Supervisors engaged in three general types of talk. Questions were of several types and served multiple purposes. Direction could be in the form of advice or commands. Finally, commendations were offered in a variety of ways.

Questions

The prevailing belief among supervisors at Upland Hills North (UHN) was that teacher reflection should guide the conference proceedings. For this reason, without exception, conferences began with the supervisor yielding the speaking floor to the teacher with some sort of opening gambit, either an invitation to reflect or a request for debriefing.

Invitations to reflect. A number of supervisors began the conference by proffering an invitation to reflect. This technique established the teacher as the "owner" of the conference. Supervisor who invited teachers to reflect had a welcoming tone and a sense of humility. In Excerpt 1, Anita invited Lucy to reflect on the observed lesson.

Excerpt 1

1 How I start these [conferences] usually is to **give you the opportunity** to **share** your reflections, think about the observation, what you thought went well, what you thought you might work on for the next time perhaps.
2 So why don't you **just** go ahead and begin
3 and then I'll interject **where appropriate** but **not wanting to interrupt** you too much,
4 and then we'll end with me making sure that we've hit on, whether you surface them or I surface them, areas of strength as well as areas of future focus.

In Utterance 1, Anita sets up her expectations for Lucy"s contribution. She frames the conference as "an opportunity" bestowed upon the teacher. The use of the word "share" implies collegiality. Finally, she is explicit that Lucy not merely criticize herself but also acknowledge what she did well.

Anita then asks Lucy to begin speaking, using the word "just" to minimize the forcefulness of the request (U2). She quickly offers what amounts to a pre-emptive apology that she may "interject" but only when appropriate and that she will attempt to curb that impulse (U3). Anita's use of the word "interrupt" to describe her potential behavior, as opposed to her earlier use of the word "interject," suggests recognition of the rudeness of such action. Finally, Anita reiterates the desire that the conference should include both positive and negative feedback and assures Lucy that this will occur (U4).

Excerpt 2 is taken from Bartholomew and Brenda's conference and includes many of the same elements as Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 2

1 I thought **maybe we** would just start overall with you **sharing** with me some of your impressions on how the class went, **what you thought went well,**

2 and, as we move through our conversation this afternoon—I can see you brought with me some student responses from the work that you were doing, and it would be **fun** to kind of take a look at them too and to see how the students responded to the activity.

3 So talk **a little bit** first about the purpose of class, what you wanted to accomplish. Did you feel met your goals?

Brenda requests that Bartholomew "share" his thoughts, particularly his positive thoughts on the observed lesson (U1). The use of the word "maybe" softens the request for information, and the plural pronoun "we" implies that the two participants are working in concert. Brenda then acknowledges Bartholomew's contribution of empirical data and describes its analysis as "fun" (U2), the implication being that the conference is neither an odious chore nor a meaningless ritual. It is not even work. Finally, Brenda yields the floor to Bartholomew, using the expression "a little bit" to minimize the imposition of her request (U3).

Debriefing requests. By contrast, debriefing requests tended to be shorter and more business-like. Some also included implicit or explicit direction for how the teacher should organize his or her thoughts, as seen in following statements taken from two separate conferences:

1	Spkr 1	So **we'll** start with **question one** and just **talk** about some of the strengths of your lesson.
2	Spkr 2	I gave you a bunch of questions. Why don't you **just kind of go through those**
3	Spkr 2	and **we'll** see how you thought about the two days and how it went.

Both of the above supervisors reference the questions for reflection and suggest that the teachers proceed through them one by one (U1-2). The verb "talk," in Utterance 1, is void of the emotionality contained in the word "share" used in the earlier invitations to reflect. Likewise, in the second example, the supervisor suggests that the teacher "go through" the questions, suggesting a somewhat routinized behavior.

Debriefing requests were not necessarily impolite or cold. Both supervisors above employ the pronoun "we" (U1, 3) to imply that the conference was a collaborative effort. The second speaker attempts to minimize the forcefulness of his direction with the terms "just" and "kind of" (U2). The brevity of the requests may have been a function of the supervisors" intention to restrict their own contributions to the conference and open more floor space for teacher talk.

Prompts and Follow-ups. At some point in most of the conferences, supervisors required more information than the teacher was providing. Some refrained from saying anything, viewing any interruption as undesirable. Others decided to employ a prompt or follow-up question, either to promote deeper, more substantive reflection or to clarify earlier teacher talk.

In Excerpt 3, Al confesses his concern that his ability to teach for deeper understanding is constrained by the amount of material he feels he needs to cover.

Excerpt 3

1	Al	In som:e (.) respects though (.4) it's like okay we need to move o:n↑ we can't >spend any more time with this<. It's time to: to move on to the next topic and it's just 'cause we have to (.) essentially.
2	Moira	So basically you're being driven by what the curriculum (.) what the curriculum is being held to at the final exam=
3	Al	Correct. [Yeah.]
4	Moira	[And so what would it take (.4) for (.) you or your PLC[14] team to not be so driven by (.) trying to get them to this exam↑ and letting the natural things happen (.) that are good things?

Moira demonstrates her understanding of Al"s concern by restating the problem and reflecting it back to him (U2), which he affirms (U3). At this point, Moira presents Al with an alternative scenario: What changes must occur to allow you to teach in the manner you prefer? (U4). Rather than indulging Al in abdicating his responsibility or chastising him for doing so, Moira asks a question that encourages Al to think about his teaching differently. Moira"s effort allows her to gather more information about how Al thinks about teaching and learning.

In Excerpt 4, Lauren confesses the difficulty she has had managing the behavior of a student, Darrin, and the efforts she has made to corral him.

Excerpt 4

1	Lauren	So it's hard (.) to keep him kind of (.) keep'm engaged but also behaving. (.5) 'Cause as soon as I give him a little bit, (.) he (.) takes a mile. (.8) Um (1.0) I've been talking to his mom a little bit, but (.)
2		I need to talk to him more after class I think (1.0) and try to (.5) I've been getting on him a lot to (.) stop leaning back in the chair (.5) or

[14] Professional Learning Community: teams of like-subject matter teachers who meet every two weeks to plan, troubleshoot, share resources, etc.

(.) stop shouting things out (1.0) and it's (3.0) it's u:h it's work (.) every day.

3 Hal (.5) How are the conversations with mom?

The lengthy pause toward the end of Lauren"s speech provides Hal with a clue that she is not only out of things to say at the moment but also out of ideas regarding Darrin. Hal offers Lauren a lifeline of sorts. If she can provide him with some insight into Darrin"s mother"s reaction to his behavior, perhaps he can offer Lauren a useful suggestion for managing his behavior in class.

Interrogative declarations: Statements in question costume. Because supervisors were committed to promoting teacher reflection, they took great pains to avoid imposing directives on them, preferring to use Socratic dialogue to evoke realization on the part of the teacher. Some supervisors, however, had "right" answers in mind and asked questions that sought to evoke that response from the teacher. Alternatively, supervisors who were reluctant to go on record as criticizing teacher behavior couched the criticism in the form of a question, allowing themselves plausible deniability if the teacher"s response was some variation on "no."

In Excerpt 5, Colleen attempted to encourage Lynn to conduct more frequent checks for student understanding. Lynn had just explained that she generally determined student comprehension of her instructions by listening to their singing. She also used the 3-2-1 method as a quick assessment, asking students to raise 1, 2, or 3 fingers to indicate their level of understanding. Colleen"s response indicates she would like Lynn to do something more.

Excerpt 5

1 Yeah. Um I like the method and it was(.) you know good on that (.5) piece.

2 Um a question maybe I would ha:ve i:s um *g* um che—

3 is there o:ther pl:a:ces in your lessons that you feel that (.3) there would be: a need for checking for understa:nding↓

4 That you know maybe I wouldn't know because I'm no:t a mu:sic person

5 you know like so when you think of (.3) different times, I know you didn't quite finish the A:ve Maria (.) piece↑ maybe that was a plan there↑ but would there be any other: (.3) places during a lesso:n or maybe: different points where you would think, "Ah maybe I should check more↑" I—you know.

Colleen affirms Lynn's use of the 3-2-1 method for the particular piece of music in question (U1). She next delivers a pre-question, as if to assure Lynn that what she is preparing to say should in no way be interpreted as presumptive (U2). Colleen then suggests that, although the 3-2-1 method worked in *this particular* case, Lynn might consider that other places or lessons might benefit from a different approach (U3). Possibly fearful of a negative response, Colleen quickly retreats from this "question," reaffirming Lynn's superior subject matter knowledge (U4), and then restates the "question." Colleen employs the word "maybe" three times in her final utterance (U5), including once in a statement she speaks as Lynn, all in an effort to avoid the appearance of imposing judgment or issuing a directive.

Wrap-up questions. As a means of concluding the conference, most supervisors asked the teachers a variation on "Do you any questions?"

Supervisor (S): [Does] anything else jump out at you now? . . .
Teacher (T): Um (3.0) no . . . I don't really have anything else to add.

S: Anything else that you can think of?
T: I don't think so. Unless. . . you have anything else.

S: Do you have any questions for me about any of the notes? Um (2.0)
T: I think I'm good.

S: What other questions or thoughts do you have?
T: Huh. I don't know right now actually.

S: So [if] you have any no other questions I can have you sign this.
T: Okay. Thanks.

In each case, the teacher responded negatively. Whether these teachers legitimately had no further questions or whether they were simply unprepared or uncomfortable asking them remains mostly speculative. This issue is taken up in greater depth in a subsequent section of this chapter examining the disparate meanings constructed by conference participants.

Direction

Most supervisors did not refrain from giving direction, nor was it clear that they should. However, that issue is discussed in greater depth in later sections and in the final chapter. Directions included advice and commands.

Advice. Advice could be prospective or retrospective. Prospective suggestions were generalizable across cases and, therefore, useful to the teacher for future instruction. Retrospective suggestions are more specific to the observed lesson and how it could have been improved.

Prospective advice. In Excerpt 6, Anita counsels Lucy on the logistics of having students work in groups. Throughout her suggestions, Anita cycles through what happened during the observed lesson, changes that Lucy should make when she uses this technique again, and reasons why these changes make sense, both pedagogically and from a classroom management perspective.

Excerpt 6

1 You did this with the group work, and told them how do I want the desks together, and they moved closely together,
2 but for pair work, too, they need to sit next to each other. They need to be right next to each other,
3 otherwise you don't have any kind of sort of intimate conversation. It doesn't seem as serious that you really want the pair work if there's several feet of space in between the kids, and then it's too easy for a third person, especially without sort of deliberate pairs--
4 You just said, "Pair up with someone next to you or behind you."

5 You know there were a number of people who just kind of sat there in groups of three. They just sort of shared with each other. Some people were pretty serious about it; some weren't, as I kind of walked around.

6 So, again, the pairing, the group work, everything about that work has to have an expectation that you mean business: "There's a reason I'm asking you get into those pairs."

7 And then those reasons or the outcome you want from that pair, even if it's not the biggest deal, still needs to be clear.

8 "I'm gonna call on one of you to share X, or you're gonna write down what you came up with, or you're gonna show—you know show of hands of how many agreed with X?" Whatever it might be. There can be a quick or—"I'm gonna call on a couple of you. You're not sure who I'm gonna call on, so be sure that both of you [have an answer]."

Anita begins by describing Lucy's behavior during the observed lesson and noting its success (U1). She then draws a contrast between group work and pair work, noting that the latter must be just as carefully structured as the former (U2). Anita follows this up with a rationale for her suggestion, implying that more careful attention to the physical set-up of her cooperative groups will improve Lucy's ability to manage student behavior (U3). The next comment returns the conversation to the observed lesson (U4) and the results of Lucy's semi-structured approach to pair work (U5). Anita implicitly addresses one of the most common dilemmas of cooperative learning, that teachers use it for no better reason than to break up the monotony of direct instruction (U6), implying this is not a good enough reason. Anita then urges Lucy not only to know why she is using collaborative learning but also to make the reasons clear to her students (U7). Finally, she provides some explicit examples of the sort of activities Lucy might employ in the future (U8).

The topic under discussion, structuring cooperative learning activities, is content-neutral. Anita could have given this same advice to any teacher, of any subject, following any observation. Lucy can apply this advice whenever she decides to use cooperative groups again.

Retrospective advice. By contrast, retrospective suggestions gaze backward at the observed lesson. They are lesson-specific, often situation-specific. Their usefulness beyond the particular context in which they are cited is circumscribed by the teacher's ability to extract transferrable concepts and to apply them in new situations.

Except 7 represents an example of retrospective advice. The objective for the day had been that the students appreciate the difference between "heat" and "temperature." In years past, Al explained to Moira, he had provided the class with a demonstration using a drop of boiling water which he dabbed on a volunteer's hand. Because the mass of the water was so small, very little heat was generated, despite the water's temperature. Moira likes that idea and begins outlining the lesson Al could have taught, offering numerous suggestions for how Al might have gotten more instructional benefit from the demonstration he conducted in the observed lesson:

Excerpt 7

1 So what if you, instead, did your kick-off question with that demo or you could put an ice cube on the table, or you put an ice cube on a hot plate, and you said, "Here's your kick off question: Explain what's happening to . . . the ice cube or to your hand or to Robbie's hand"—whoever you did it to.

2 And then, from there, have them, with their partners, use that demo to figure out what those definitions of heat are,

3 'cause then they have something, since it is so abstract like you said, they have something tangible and concrete . . . to go back [and say], "Hey, remember at the start of the lesson when we did this?"

4 And then as you're discussing it, you could've just tied in, "Oh, well we use [the variable] Q as heat," and just put up what your variables meant, you know.

Moira contrasts Al's teacher-centered instruction *about* the demonstration with a student-centered inquiry *into* the demonstration (U1). She then tells him how he could use his cooperative groups to further investigate the principles of thermodynamics (U2), citing the benefit of a concrete model the students can use to scaffold their growing understanding of an

abstraction (U3). Finally, Moira offers Al a method by which he can integrate and add meaning to the variables used to calculate these concepts (U4).

Assuming that the teacher‟s goal should be to create circumstances which encourage and enable students to build their own understanding, then Moira has provided Al with an exemplary lesson plan. However, she could also be perceived as a "Monday morning quarterback."[15] Moira does not then ask Al to reflect on how he might apply this lesson template to a different topic, so some doubt remains about whether Al understands how to use the model generally or if his understanding is limited only to thermodynamics.

Commands. Occasionally, supervisors deviated even further from their preferred path of eliciting revelations from teachers and issued some type of command. Few were comfortable doing so and attempted to cushion the blow and their own stake in the order with a series of politeness strategies and retreats. As demonstrated below, these actions typically proved ineffective. Not only did they fail to weaken the blow, they also rendered the message unintelligible or refutable.

It is illustrative to juxtapose Anita‟s issuance of a command with another administrator‟s treatment of the same topic: the presence of beverages in class. In Excerpt 8, Anita scolds Lucy for having coffee with her during the observed lesson.

Excerpt 8

1 Don't walk around the room with coffee . . .
2 I'm not a supporter of do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do, and I notice we haven't cracked down on that. You'll see some people always have their coffee.
3 Water, I get that sometimes. Right? Parched throat or dry.
4 But I would just say, with coffee, leave it in the office or if you happen to have brought it in the room, which, you know you're working before first hour maybe in the room—it's

[15] A colloquial expression. In U.S. football, the quarterback is the individual who determines how and where the ball will move on each play. Most games are played on Sunday, and, on Monday mornings, fans second-guess decisions made by the quarterbacks of teams that lost.

not the end of the world. Leave it on the desk.
5 We're not letting the kids have coffee.

Anita's message is very clear: don't bring coffee into the room (U1). She acknowledges that this rule is not universally followed, but she points out the hypocrisy of teachers asking students to behave in a manner to which they do not also conform (U2). Anita makes an exception for water, presumably an exception that goes for both teachers and students (U3). She then repeats her stance against coffee and how Lucy should handle the situation should she ever forget in the future (U4). Finally, she brings the focus back to the issue of fairness (U5). Anita leaves no doubt as to where she stands on this issue, but she is surgical in her delivery of the message.

Hal voices similar concerns about the presence of beverages in Lauren's classroom. The difference between his delivery and Anita's is stark, as evidenced in Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9

1 The food and the drinks. There were several people that had—
2 I don't know what the limitation is on drinks
3 and it's gonna be hard now to enforce something new like no more drinks,
4 but they probably shouldn't be having those in the first place.

Hal introduces the subject (U1) and immediately retreats from it by claiming ignorance of science department policy (U2). Utterance 3 creates several unnecessary layers of complexity. Hal appears to intend this statement as evidence that he realizes he is asking Lauren to do something difficult. It has two other potential effects, though, both negative. First, it diminishes Lauren's confidence that she can institute a new policy this late in the school year. Second, it raises the question "Then why bring it up?" Hal sums up by repeating his directive, using the hedge "probably" to distance himself from it (U4).

Lauren seemed fairly contemptuous of Hal's observation. In our interview, she noted that "Hal had said after our last observation there were six water bottles on the table, two

Gatorade bottles, things like that . . . Moira has never talked to me about kids having water bottles on the tables." Her implication was that what Hal considered data were picayune details that had little to do with real issues of instruction.

Commendations

Anita indicated in our interview that conferences should be structured in three parts. The first was the teacher's reflection on the observed lesson or what I refer to later as the "reporting out" phase. Next came the "commendation" portion of the conference during which supervisors cited teacher strengths. Finally, supervisors noted "areas of future focus," that is, critical comments. Few supervisors followed this template although most did provide commendations. There was great variation in the types, amounts, and perceived sincerity of commendations.

Ritualistic praise. The postobservation conferences at UHN were guided by several documents, among them the preobservation form, the questions for reflection, and Danielson's (2007) *Framework for Teaching*. Some supervisors used these documents almost as checklists. Excerpt 10 reproduces the "commendation" portion of a conference, during which the supervisor points out the positive aspects of the observed lesson.

Excerpt 10

1 You let them know they could use their boo:ks↑=some of them had ques↑tion:s you know .hh about do they have the whole sentence↓ or just um fill in the blank write the word and you know you clarified those things.

2 And then also when you were going ↑over them, that the stud:ents you called on students and if they didn't have the correct answer you didn't just go to someone e:lse↑ but you tried to help them com:e to the correct answer↓ .hh which I thought was great too because then they (.) you know it's almost like encouraging them to like okay keep trying↑=

3 and (.) .hh then um with the partner↑ activity↑ one of the things↑ .hh you know again these are factual but (.) you had the kids move their desks closer together and insisted that they do that= which I think is great 'cause I think sometimes it's easier to say "Put your

desks together" and the kids don't do it, and you'd just "Eh." But they really needed to be close together: and so you insisted that they do that=which I thought was great . . .

4 and then um (.) that at the end of the: class you had those three sentence or questions on the board, but I just that was the only thing I thought they were a little bit rush:ed for: that activity↑

5 but overall↑ the students were on task throughout the whole period and did seem very interested in the [activity]. I mean we could look at them and they were working together↑ . . .

6 And then so I mean: you think you actually put thought into what [material] you picked for them:↑ and planned the:: the listening that you were able to make accessible for them↑ through: that level of the activity that you planned was challenging but so that they could (.) certainly complete it. .hh

7 And then um you also go over the: objectives for the day↑ and let them know what they're supposed to (.) accomplish during the lesson:↑

8 And walk around↑ to assess their learning. And though sometimes you you specifically call on certain students .hh and then also that while they're working you walk around:d to see how they're doing↑ .hh

9 and um you know that you also h—provided an opp—an activity for the closur:e, was a little rushed but it was still I thought it was a good closing activity↑ just (.) they shou-- it was unfortunate they didn't have more time .hh to do that↑ but then again, like you said you adjusted that for the: next two classes↑ . . .

10 I did hear notice that you asked called on a student to answer and somebody else blurted out the answer, and you said, "I didn't call you," so I think that's good too that they .hh you addressed that=that so students don't continue to blurt out answers↑

One of the elements that makes a conversation recognizable as a conversation is turn-taking. Even an impolite conversation is marked by the speakers yielding the floor to each other, and one of the most common methods by which this is accomplished is by ending a sentence with a downward inflection as if to signal, "I am done." Many of the sentences in the above passage conclude with upward inflections, implying that the speaker has more to say. By contrast, pauses

and breaths, two other indicators that the speaker is yielding the floor, tend to occur mid-sentence. By placing these "stop signs" in the middle of a thought, the supervisor effectively enjoins the teacher from commenting. For the teacher to speak at that point would constitute an interruption.

What is unclear is why the supervisor is so determined to hold the floor. Typically, speakers employ this technique to avoid interruption and, therefore, confrontation (Liddicoat, 2007). If the partner cannot speak, she cannot disagree. There is little in the above passage, however, with which the teacher would be moved to disagree. Within the space of just under six minutes, including the excised portions, the supervisor compliments the teacher on the following elements in the observed lesson:

- Clarity of instructions;
- Questioning strategies;
- Management of cooperative groupings;
- Appropriateness of activity;
- Levels of student engagement;
- Lesson planning;
- Statement of learning objectives;
- Proximity to students; and
- Correction of student misbehavior.

The supervisor appears to be describing a highly successful lesson, yet the rapid-fire delivery does not allow meaningful discussion of these behaviors. The passage has a frenetic tone, as though the supervisor is more concerned with "getting through" the list than with how the comments affect the teacher.

Faint praise. Some commendations were made in such perfunctory fashion that their sincerity was dubious. Excerpt 11, taken from Hal and Lauren's conference, presents a supervisor grasping for something "nice" to say.

Excerpt 11

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1   Hal     Um .hh so hh.  Let me kinda flip through these
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		notes here and see what else.
2		Um is there anything else that's kinda popped out?
3		(9.0)
4		I thought the use of the timer was good. You know I noticed in one of your observations that was something you were gonna do and um I think that's good for the students to to understand exactly how much time they have on something
5	Lauren	Yeah.
6	Hal	So that was hh. I thought that worked really well.
7		(5.5)
8		And the stations I thought went well. Um getting 'em up, getting 'em moving, giving a timeframe and and the opportunities that you had to walk around and kind of check for understanding as they did those went well.
9		(6.0)
10		I like how you used the projector and the white board. You know you've got a projection up there and you used it to make notes there.
11	Lauren	Yeah.
12	Hal	Very clear.
13		(15.0)
14		I think that's all I have.

Hal begins with a continuer, an audible inhale, another continuer, and an audible exhale, as though compelled to fill the silence. His next comment indicates he is not prepared to say anything further. He will have to check his field notes to see if he has neglected any relevant comments. The intent of Utterance 2 is ambiguous. It is phrased as a question; thus Lauren should feel compelled to respond, but she does not. A nine-second pause ensues while Hal scans his notes for commendations.

Given the amount of time that passes, what follows feels anticlimactic. Hal commends Lauren‟s use of a timer, explaining that it‟s "good for students to understand exactly how much time they have on something." He does not cite specific student behavior associated with the use of the timer. Lauren accepts his commendation (U5) but is not moved to reflect on it or ask him to elaborate. Hal offers another general compliment that the use of the timer "worked well."

Following another lengthy pause (U7), Hal asserts that the teacher‟s use of stations “went well” (U8). This assessment appears the result of the physical activity required by the stations, but, again, there are no specific citations of student learning behavior he witnessed and only a vague reference to Lauren “kind of check[ing] for understanding” (U9). Another lengthy pause ensues (U10) after which Hal commends Lauren on her use of technology (U11). Much earlier in the conference, Lauren had cited as one of her strengths that she was able to overcome the absence of a smart board in her room by using the overhead projector on the whiteboard. Hal elected to let Lauren‟s self-assessment pass at the time, which could be attributed to his desire to allow her uninterrupted access to the speaking floor. However, his decision not to frame the current observation in light of Lauren‟s earlier reference to it suggests either that the compliment itself is not very sincere or that he wasn‟t really listening earlier. Once again, Lauren accepts the compliment with a simple acknowledgement (U11). Hal offers a short, possible explanation of why the use of technology was exemplary, although the clarity to which he refers is itself unclear. It could be simply that the instructions were made highly visible by writing them this way or that Lauren‟s instruction was rendered more comprehensible through her use of technology. Hal takes another 15 seconds to review the rest of his notes and cannot find another item on which to commend Lauren.

Negative praise. Occasionally, supervisors would remark favorably on a teacher‟s actions not by noting that something positive happened because of what the teacher *did* but that something negative *did not* happen because the teacher did not fail to do it. In Excerpt 12, Mike commends Molly‟s lesson design.

Excerpt 12

What I was wondering was did you recognize—from my perspective, the slips that you gave the kids to arrange on the desk top—without those slips, I don't think they could

have successfully done the task.

Mike does not tell Molly that the students were successful because of how she structured the lesson. Rather, the students were not *un*successful because they were not forced to perform the task "without those slips."

Praise. Occasionally, supervisors commented favorably, specifically, and with apparent sincerity on a teacher behavior. In Excerpt 13, Brenda compliments Bartholomew on the way he transitioned between activities.

Excerpt 13

1 You did have three activity shifts that had to take place, and you were moving really out of classroom space, then to the main staging area of the classroom, and then to a post-reflection activity,
2 and I thought it was seamless.
3 Because I do know some of the students in your class. I wasn't sure that they could hold their focus, and I was really struck by the professional focus of the group and the seriousness with which they took the assignment.

In Utterance 1, Brenda makes specific observations about the lesson. She then offers an unmistakable compliment (U2). Finally, she explains the compliment in terms of how students responded to Bartholomew"s decisions.

Teacher Talk

With a single exception, supervisors talked more than teachers, sometimes 150% as much (Table 4.2). Additionally, teacher talk tended to be responses to supervisor talk. Although each conference began with a period during which teachers were asked to reflect, this reflection took place at the behest of the supervisor and was guided by questions generated by the supervisor. It also appeared separate from, rather than integrated with, the supervisor"s later comments. I have sub-categorized teacher talk into reflection and pseudo-reflection. The difference between the two is often subtle but critical, revealing that all teacher talk is not created equal.

Table 4.2
Ratio of Teacher to Supervisor Talk in Postobservation Conferences

Conference Participants	Teacher Word Count	Supervisor Word Count
Lynn and Colleen	1,368 (37%)	2,267 (62%)
Al and Moira	3,916 (47%)	4504 (53%)
Grant and Phin	4,676 (53%)	4198 (47%)
Lauren and Hal	1,764 (43%)	2,375 (57%)
Lucy and Anita	2,753 (29%)	6831 (71%)
Molly, Mike, and Ruth	1,313 (27%)	1069/2435 (73%) (22%, 51%)
Holly and Allegra	1,925 (49%)	2,041 (51%)
Bartholomew and Brenda	1,414 (41%)	2005 (59%)

Reflection

Reflection is a nonlinear, iterative process. Demonstrably reflective teachers not only offered alternatives for how the observed lesson might have been improved but also verbalized the metacognition underlying these alternatives. Their commentary cycled between their own behaviors and those of the students, analyzing evidence, providing rationales, and remarking on outcomes. Verbal reflection involved such acts as description, interpretation, speculation, revelation, and confession. Most of the teachers in this study demonstrated this complexity of thought, although some did it more often or more thoroughly than others.

In Excerpt 14, Molly demonstrates a her capacity for reflection. Her lesson was part of a unit on French culture. She distributed packets containing strips of paper on which she had written the lyrics to a popular French song. Students had to put the strips of paper in order as they listened to the song. At the outset of the conference, Ruth asked her to discuss generally how she felt "the lesson went."

Excerpt 14

```
1   I thought generally it went well .  .  .
2   I had thought I overplanned in the beginning, but I really
    overplanned,
3   and I did that because the last time my lesson was a little
    bit too short,
4   but I think that it's good to overplan but not extremely
```

overplan
5 and I think that if I had divided the tasks a little bit better
6 it wouldn't have seemed like such a big thing to ask of them.
7 Like for example the song, if I remember right, one side of the room had the first two stanzas. The second had the last two stanzas. And then a few pairs had the refrain.
8 And I think it would have been better if I had two or maybe four people do just three lines,
9 We might have gotten a little further on that first day,
10 and I think that would have made it more manageable for the students and easier to discuss.
11 'Cause when they were translating it they were doing it word for word.
12 And what I had them later do, when they finished up the work, I had them say, "Okay, now to us that doesn't make any sense. What do you think that means? Let's think outside the box. What is your interpretation?"
13 And I think that if I had given them less to do in the beginning, if I gave them less to translate, I think that would have made the lesson go a little better and it wouldn't have been so rushed at the end.
14 But they were on task so that was good.
15 I was a little afraid of the song at the beginning
16 because I could tell they were like "Oh, my gosh!" But it was like that in every class,
17 and I've never done that before so I didn't expect that reaction,
18 and at first I was afraid, like, "Oh, I don't know that this is gonna go well,"
19 but I think once they got used to it, it came a little bit easier for them and so I think that was an interesting activity. I think they enjoyed it.
20 Um even though they weren't sure exactly the meaning of what they were listening to,
21 they were listening for the sounds and I think that will help them in later activities building listening comprehension.
22 So, overall, I think it went okay. I just overplanned a little bit and I should have divided the tasks a little bit differently.

Molly begins with a general, positive statement (U1), which she then qualifies, citing imperfect teacher behavior (U2) and offers a rationale for why she engaged in that behavior (U3). She

issues a value judgment of her teacher behavior (U4), offers an alternative behavior (U5), and finally speculates on how her students would have reacted to that alternative (U6).

Molly then describes the strategy she used (U7) and contrasts that with what she could have done (U8), once again speculating on preferred outcomes that might have occurred, both for the schedule (U9) and the students‟ self-efficacy (U10). She then returns to description, now of student behavior (U11) and teacher imposed learning outcomes (U12). Molly again suggests that alternative strategies would have yielded better results (U13) but recognizes that the lesson was far from a failure (U14). She confesses her own doubts even at the time she was conducting the lesson (U15), recognizing that this response was the result of her concern for her students (U16) and her lack of experience (U17). Molly returns to her fears about the lesson (U18), dismissing them once she observed student behavior that suggested the fears were unfounded (U19). She admits that the students‟ knowledge is still incomplete (U20), but that the lesson accomplished something (U21). Finally, Molly sums up the crux of her entire previous speech (U22).

Reflection need not include admission of failure. In Excerpt 15, Bartholomew reflects on how he enacted mini-tutorials for each of the small groups in his stage design class. Each group had been assigned one of eight elements or principles of design, such as contrast, rhythm, pattern, or unity. They were then given some time "to come up with some sort of physical moving around on stage to illustrate [it] to the rest of the class." In other words, students were to use their bodies to represent the principle or element assigned to them. Brenda asked him to "share with me a little bit about your thinking about the tutorial," to which he responded:

Excerpt 15

1 Because each group had to become kind of instant experts on one principle,
2 I wanted to get around and coach them and make sure that they understood how to illustrate [it] so that they were actually accurate.

3 Because a lot of kids were being exposed to these principles for the first time,
4 I wanted to make sure that the first time that they actually designed using that one principle that they were correct,
5 so I did run around [and] make sure they understood which principle they were trying to do based on the pictures they were looking at
6 and all the groups did a fine job of identifying.
7 Some of them struggled a little bit with then how to stage something, and I knew they would.
8 I mean we're at the beginning.
9 So that's what that coaching was for, to say, "Alright, well, how can you assemble bodies on a stage and/or objects to look, like this painting, so that we see that there's balance, for instance, or to see that there's rhythm?"
10 And they would brainstorm until ideas came out and they recognized them themselves,
11 and I would just point saying, "Ah, you got it. That's your idea. Now figure out who you want to use and how you want to assemble people on the stage to make that work."

Bartholomew states what amounts to the learning objective (U1), setting that up as the rationale for his teacher behavior (U2). He then reveals an understanding of the limits of his students' knowledge (U3), once again providing a rationale for his behavior as a teacher (U4). Having established what he wished to accomplish, Bartholomew then describes his physical activity as well as what he was looking for as he moved among the groups (U5).

Bartholomew then positively assesses the learning he witnessed (U6) before acknowledging the difficulties some groups encountered (U7) and offering an explanation for the struggle (U8). Knowing what difficulties his students encountered, he then describes his one-on-one approach to encourage students' active construction of understanding (U10), the student behavior that grew out of his coaching (U10), and finally the attainment of the learning objective (U11).

Pseudo-reflection. Not all teacher talk was reflective, although it seemed so superficially. Both Molly and Bartholomew provided evidence of their awareness of what their

students were experiencing, intellectually and affectively, and what effect their teaching choices had on those experiences.

Story-telling. Some teachers, by contrast, provided detailed descriptions that focused almost exclusively on their teacher behaviors and the rationales thereof. For example, in Excerpt 16 below, Holly describes her use of what she calls an "intervention," a fail-safe for historically unsuccessful students to achieve mastery of the material in her Foods II class:

Excerpt 16

1 As you know in the past I've been grabbing my student test scores and keeping track of my students for the last five years
2 And I pretty much know how they do on each test
3 And with all this information, I said to my . . . literacy liaison coach . . . "Here, I have all this. I've been implementing reading strategies to try to look at ways to get them to learn. What can I do to track it? What process can I use?"
4 So she and I came up with an intervention checklist
5 and I'm new to this assessment literacy. I took the workshop. I started last semester implementing the process
6 . . . I told the students if on an assignment or a quiz or anything, they don't reach a 70%, that they have a sheet called an intervention checklist, and they need to see me
7 and we're gonna discuss some solutions or some way to study to learn the material . . . It can come from rereading the material or outlining or teacher-tutor or peer intervention. They can have conversations together.
8 It's not a punishment. It's if [you] don't know it 70% or more, then [you] may need a little help in understanding it and relearning it.
9 And you know what? I've had my first review sessions with Foods II students.
10 I had a page of students who didn't make 70%, who all did interventions, and all but one student who is now just come back from being out of school has done their intervention.
11 Three of 'em, the next day or the next class period when they had an intervention, said, "Can we stay during your planning and do an intervention and go over it?"

Holly begins with a description of her behavior as a teacher-researcher (U1) that provided her with information about her students (U2). She describes the desire to use this information to

enhance student achievement (U3) and the tool she and the literacy coach have devised to do this (U4). Holly acknowledges her novice status (U5) then describes her action as a teacher (U6) and explains how the tool is used with the students (U7). She offers a rationale for the tool‟s use (U8), further description of her teacher behaviors (U9), followed by descriptions of various student behaviors relative to completing the interventions (U10-11).

I do not wish to suggest that Holly is not a reflective individual or that the intervention checklist did not accomplish the goal for which it is intended, merely that these qualities were not demonstrated in the above except. There is a temptation to see all detailed teacher speech as reflection on practice, but Holly provided no evidence that the intervention tool had the desired effect of increasing student mastery of the material or that she knows what skills any student struggles with or why. Because Holly‟s tool had the imprimatur of the literacy liaison, there may have been an assumption that it must work, but Holly did not mention subsequent test scores, reduction in the need for future interventions, or any other indicator of student achievement. The students seemed anxious to complete the interventions, but there was no clear indication of why, nor does Holly‟s department chair, Allegra, follow-up with questions to that effect.

Talking Points. Another type of pseudo-reflection present in the data relied on teachers‟ ability to shift the focus of the answer away from the question and toward an instructional initiative they knew was of high priority to the administration. In addition to literacy training, UHN had begun supporting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teams of like-subject matter teachers who met biweekly to discuss learning strategies, share ideas, and generally break down the isolation in which teachers typically work, discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Another of the administration‟s priorities was to encourage teachers‟ use of questioning strategies—asking questions that inspired higher order thinking from the students. All supervisors emphasized the

need to avoid asking questions to the class as a whole—what they termed "broadcast" questions—and then calling only on those students whose hands were raised.

Excerpt 17 is Al"s response to Moira"s query: "Al, when you design your lessons, how do you go about thinking about the design of your lessons. Like, how did you decide what to do on Day One?"

Excerpt 17

1 Essentially, we knew we wanted to do the first days of thermo[dynamics], so that's really heat and temperature. That's what we wanted to try and tackle.

2 So me, Tony, and Isabel have been emailing some of that stuff around, like batting things around about what we can use, what we can do that day. . .

3 So those [documents] were all constantly being modified and stuff like that.

4 How can we get [the students] to discover the parts of the heat equation is essentially what we were trying to do there, rather than us just talking and giving them the lecture of it. How can we get them to come up with some of these things by looking at different scenarios and different cases? So that's essentially where it started. We had our main objectives that we wanted to hit and just [had to decide], "Okay in what fashion can we get the kids to do most of it and us to try and facilitate a smaller amount of what we need to do?"

5 And then, obviously, we already have the test in the back of our mind of what we've done in the past,

6 but a lot of our tests this year have begun to change every unit as far as what the questions that we're asking because I feel what we've used in the past each year changes a little bit, but I think this year I think we've changed more significantly than we have in the past as far as asking questions,

7 trying to use less plug-and-chug sort of questions. If we use a question like that we'll attach something to it as far as them giving an explanation piece or something along those lines where it's a little more in depth with the content.

Al begins by stating the topic of the lesson, as opposed to a learning objective (U1). He then references collaboration with his PLC team members (U2), followed by an implication that their

work is quite dynamic (U3). Al then restates the question that Moira has asked him, adding a commitment to constructivist pedagogy (U4). The next statement suggests teaching to the test and a reliance on old material (U5). Al retreats from that behavior by describing more dynamism in the form of test construction (U6) and content that requires demonstrated understanding (U7). Moira‟s question—How do you plan a lesson?—has not been answered, but Al has said many of the "right" things. To her credit, Moira recognizes that Al did not deal with her question, and I address their subsequent interactions in the next section.

What meanings and understandings does each participant construct from these conferences? What factors may account for any disparities between participants in meanings and understandings

The information from my one-on-one interviews with participants provided insight into what teachers and supervisors took away from the conferences. All but one participant verbalized a belief in the value of the clinical cycle of supervision and a desire to continue observations and conferences, even if they were not contractually mandated. However, an intensive study of participant responses, both in the conferences and the interviews, yielded some considerable disparities in the messages and meanings participants constructed from their interactions. Several significant themes emerged from the data.

Some teachers voiced a lack of faith in the feedback they received from their supervisors. This mistrust could stem from a basic mistrust of the supervisor as a person, a sense that the supervisor did not have enough knowledge of the teacher‟s practice to render a fair judgment, or the feeling that the advice was prefabricated. Other teachers simply did not understand what their supervisors were saying to them. At times, lack of comprehension stemmed from the teacher‟s cognitive limitations. At other times, supervisor speech was rendered incomprehensible through circumlocution. Finally, most, though not all, teachers left the

conferences cognizant of the necessity to initiate changes in their practice. Some felt empowered to do so, and others did not.

I don't value your feedback because I don't trust *you*.

At least one dyad had a history that impeded open and honest communication between them. Holly and Allegra, in individual interviews, admitted these tensions and explained how they had resulted in disinclination on both their parts to make themselves fully understood. When asked to relate her impressions of the conference's success, Allegra audibly exhaled and then explained, "Holly and I have had a tough year together this year. . . . There was something [that] happened last year that caused our relationship to be pretty strained."

Holly's perspective on the tensions in the relationship seemed extremely personal. She described Allegra's attitude toward her as an "I'm-gonna-get-her-if-I-can type thing." She cited Allegra's tendency to reschedule meetings as a sign of contempt: "She has changes all the time. She changes meetings . . . and to me [that indicates that] I'm not an important entity in her." When asked to explain the origins of the friction between them, she cited one incident in particular:

> I was getting involved in [committees] and presenting, and she would have blowups at [department] meeting[s]: "I DON'T WANNA—WE'RE NOT DOING THIS!!" . . . I got up and left the meeting once with tears in my eyes because here I'm trying to bring information . . . and she's blowing off the handle: "We're not doing all this!" And ever since then, my involvement and my accolades have drawn us farther apart.

Holly interpreted Allegra's conference behaviors as indicative of Allegra's predisposition against her and, as implied in the above passage, professional jealousy.

Allegra offered only one criticism of the observed lesson: Holly should consider whether her closure activity, a check for student understanding, was sufficient. Holly had begun using a self-assessment tool called a target sheet (Appendix D) on which were listed all the learning objectives for the unit. Each day, students were to examine the sheet and assess their own

learning. Ideally, by the end of the unit, all students should rate their understanding of each objective as very high. On a day-to-day basis, the target sheet provided students a visual cue to ask questions if their understandings were not where they should be. The portion of the conference during which Allegra questioned the efficacy of the sheet is reproduced in Excerpt 18.

Excerpt 18

1	Allegra	There was just a couple I think yeah one uh one area is just at the end [um
2	Holly	[The wrap] [up]
3	Allegra	[They had some kind of quiet reading time is to still .hh you know wrap it up with some sort of uh summary of the day, and it could've been a summary statement↑ that they coulda done together in their kitchen groups .hh um and turned in one summary statement per group↑ U:m (.) so what do what do you think about that (.5) [suggestion?]
4	Holly	[Um (.) let's see. I think I I u:sed↑ I was using my targets as into the wrap up. That's what I was [thinking=
5	Allegra	[Okay.]
6	Holly	=was my instead of an exit slip, let's go back and look at some of these targets=
7	Allegra	=O:kay.
8	Holly	And tha:t's how I'd I used the targets as an exit slip [that day].
9	Allegra	[Now do you collect those targets↑
10	Holly	[Oh I]
11	Allegra	[Or not [it's=
12	Holly	[We
13	Allegra	=not 'til the end.
14	Holly	I don't keep them.
15	Allegra	[Okay.]
16	Holly	[They keep them, but I oh I check them.
17	Allegra	[Okay]
18	Holly	[I go around and make sure that .hh that we go bef—*g* before the test, we look at our targets=what (.) now .hh ideally you're should be all over to "I really I [understand=
19	Allegra	[Right.
20	Holly	=it.
21	Allegra	I think it's grea:t↑ I think maybe just *g* more

```
                frequent checks↑ of that↑ *g* is what I you know=
22   Holly      [Yes]
23   Allegra    [We all you know need help with .hh [assessing]
24   Holly                                          [And you
                know,
25   Allegra    You know in in t-in the interim.  So maybe:=
26   Holly      I'm still I still [need to
27   Allegra                      [And I know that's a new sheet
                for you still or the way you've done it for each
                .hh you know so it's still something you're new
                to using, but I would say maybe um a more
                frequent check↑ 'cause maybe (.) by the time you
                check it, it's a little la:ter than you realize
                they're still not you know quite on board there.
28   Holly      Right.  But [um
29   Allegra                [So that would be my one
                recommendation.
```

Both Holly and Allegra listened to this portion of the conference and were asked to comment on it. The disparity in their interpretations illustrates how powerful relationships are in shaping understanding. In the passage below, Holly describes Allegra as completely dismissive of her efforts:

> She went through the lesson and she proceeded to say I didn"t do an exit or come back and review what I had taught. . . And I said, "My targets were the closure for them to go back and actually read them and then actually [determine] do [they] understand it." I mean I went through the whole process and that kind of went over her head.

Following this interpretation, Holly went on to explain her own complicity in not being understood: "Listening to myself [on the audio clip], I don"t think I explained it, and I should have, to her. I think I should [have given] a better explanation."

Holly cited a number of reasons for not pursuing a more thorough explanation. One was that she felt physically intimidated during the conference. Below, Holly describes Allegra"s body language during the conference:

> [She] is leaning over my face like this. You know you"re kinda like when somebody"s leaning into you like that, it"s—a couple times she got up out of her lifted up out of her [chair] like this, ((Holly demonstrates)) and I thought, "Okay. I get it!" . . . You know so there I didn"t explain myself and I should have.

There is no way to verify whether Holly‟s description is accurate, nor is it necessary to do so. What is significant is that Holly remembers the conference this way.

Holly‟s second justification for her passivity was that she did not believe Allegra was really listening to her. She perceived the conference "as very one-sided and predetermined on what she has to say and she sticks to that opinion." Holly believed Allegra had a particular image in her head of what a proper closure activity looked like, and "she never wavered that I didn‟t close [the lesson] even though I said my example was the closure. She never said, „Oh, I didn‟t know that.‟"

Holly described how the intimidation and sense of not being listened to manifested themselves in frequent interruptions by Allegra:

> She interrupted me all the time. She never let me finish. And it was this in my face and interrupting me and so I just sat back . . . because every time I started to say something she‟d interrupt me. Or she‟d want an answer and I‟d start to say and she‟d cut me off.

A dispassionate analysis of the conference transcript reveals some validity to these allegations. Excerpt 18 contains numerous instances of overlapping dialogue, most of which were initiated by Allegra (U 3, 9, 11, 19, 26, and 29). Additionally, these overlaps often occurred at points where Holly had begun an explanation and was not permitted to finish or had an answer provided for her (U19, 26, 29).

When Allegra was asked to remark on Excerpt 18, she asserted that "the target sheet is great, but it doesn‟t, at the end of the day, give her a good gauge as to who got the information." While Allegra noted the advantages to student self-assessment, she also brought up some valid points about its limitations:

> I think the kids should be able to gauge their own learning but . . . what if the kid isn‟t putting „em all into the "I understand completely" [box] and [Holly] doesn‟t know that „til the day before the test? I don‟t think that‟s gonna help you or her. [Int.: Or if the kid is putting the check there but doesn‟t really] doesn‟t really know . . . Right. Right. And that‟s the point I was trying to get across.

That point was definitely not received. Allegra explained, "I don‟t want to offend her any more than I supposedly offended her last year, so that [conference] . . . wasn‟t that great in terms of depth." The interpersonal tensions between the two individuals erected a barrier to successful communication.

The weak communication between Allegra and Holly is demonstrated in high relief when viewed in contrast to the identical message communicated between a different dyad, Bartholomew and Brenda. Bartholomew was also using a student self-assessment tool, and in Excerpt 19, Brenda suggests a way to improve its effectiveness and accuracy:

Excerpt 19

1	Brenda	You know I was thinking that possibly what might be a better pre- and post-document for you would be a picture of a really interesting stage setting
2	Bartholomew	M-hm?
3	Brenda	And ask them in a stage setting
4	Bartholomew	M-hm
5	Brenda	To pick out the two most predominant elements
6	Bartholomew	M-hm. M-hm.
7	Brenda	And to explain why they think it's the way they do and then at the end give them the same document um and ask them to kind of take a look at it again. Uh and to see if they change their mind.

Bartholomew recognizes Brenda‟s desire to have students provide demonstrable proof that they understand the material. When asked to explain Brenda‟s critique, he held out the assessment sheet (Appendix E) and said,

> What she was referring to is that this document here, which does really ask [students] can they identify and can they define each of these [terms]. [Brenda suggested] to have them take a look at an actual picture . . . include that visual element on this pre- and post-[instruction assessment] as well to see how well they do with an actual picture, not just ((imitating student thought process)) "Contrast. I know what that means." But can you pick which of these is used in an actual photograph or painting? . . . Which is excellent [advice]. I mean it really is.

Bartholomew also brought up assessment issues that were not addressed in the conference but that he and Brenda clearly discussed at some other time:

> Her point of future focus for me . . . [is] rather than just having a pre- and a post-evaluation . . . for each lesson, have one at the beginning of the unit . . . and one at the end of the entire unit . . . And we talked about how we might organize that.

Brenda‟s explanation of the topic of assessment aligns perfectly with Bartholomew‟s. Regarding the use of student self-assessment, she said,

> I was trying to get him to see is that those little feedback sheets he gave aren‟t going to give him the information he really needs . . . because he‟s using pretty much a self-assessment tool. He doesn‟t have questions built into that that require some kind of assessment on his part to see whether or not the kids‟ self-assessment is matching up with the teacher‟s assessment.

Of on-going assessment, Brenda explained,

> His first couple of efforts at [designing summative assessments] were kind of like right-and-wrong, factual, fill-in-the-blank, not higher order thinking . . . So I would say the biggest area of growth that he has taken on for himself this year is to thinking about that world of assessment from an on-going, post-holing kind of process.

Bartholomew and Brenda‟s echoing of each other‟s interpretations, even in the absence of stimulated recall, revealed a supervisor-teacher relationship wherein honest feedback is delivered, received, and acted on.

Brenda offered an eloquent explanation of how such interactions are achieved. The evaluation conference and resultant document must “mirror the relationship the chair has with the teacher throughout the year.” A department chair, Brenda asserted, is empowered to offer criticism in the conference only “because we‟ve been talking about it all year!” Brenda recognized that teachers interpret the conference through the lens of their relationship with their evaluators, thus the postobservation conference and evaluation are “only a formal manifestation of what we‟re doing all the time.”

I don't value your feedback because you have limited knowledge of my practice

Another circumstance that allowed teachers to devalue and, possibly, disregard feedback was a belief that the supervisor was not equipped to issue a particular judgment based on what he or she had seen. Lauren and Hal were such a dyad. Lauren had been released from her contract for the following year. There was some dispute, however, about the reasons for her release. While two chemistry teachers were leaving UHN, the number of sections of physics went down for the 2010-2011 school year. Lauren was not certified to teach physics, so although the science department was in need of another teacher, Lauren could not fill that position.

I asked several administrators whether they would have been willing to take a chance on Lauren for a second year if she had been certified to teach chemistry. Their responses varied. One leaned toward "no," saying, "I think that if she were able to teach chemistry, we would have had to have thought more about the decision." Another was more troubled by the decision: "Lauren[„s release] to me was a surprise. It was nothing I was anticipating . . . and I feel bad. I feel like she was back-stabbed."

One thing that both administrators agreed on was that Lauren had skill deficits, particularly in classroom management. Given these weaknesses, neither administrator could justify the disruption her retention would have caused to the rest of the faculty. Said one, "Ultimately Lauren didn"t show the growth demonstrated to make me make all of those decisions to keep her on staff. So her growth, especially in management, just has not been there."

Lauren conceded she struggled with classroom management, but it was less clear whether she attributed the same urgency to this problem as her administrators. She described the circumstances under which she learned of her termination:

> [Hal] had said that I showed no improvement in behavior management, and I disagreed with that, so I brought it up to him, and we talked about what I had

> improved on and what I hadn‟t improved on, and I had asked him to clarify that in the write-up, and he changed it to *minimal* improvement in behavior management, so I wasn‟t too satisfied with that, but I signed my paper and I turned it back in. . . . Later that day I was called into the office and . . . they told me that they were releasing me for the year.

Lauren believed that the majority of her management difficulties had taken place first semester in her earth science class. She received guidance from some of the staff in charge of student discipline, and the class improved significantly. However, Hal, who conducted the observation that provided the data for this study, never observed her earth science class nor saw how much improvement had taken place. Thus, "coming from Hal, it was really hard to hear" that her management skills had not improved. She suggested that the negative written evaluation was simply an effort by the administrators to make themselves feel better about having to let her go.

She disputed Hal‟s contention that behavior management was a classroom-wide problem in her physics class "where I felt like the behavior management problem was *Darrin*." She referred to the suggestions Hal made following her first evaluation: "call home, write detentions, and all of those things I‟d done with Darrin. So I had been trying to take that advice." Lauren‟s implication was that Hal‟s counsel was ineffectual; therefore, he would be no better able to handle Darrin than she was. Lauren indicated no sense of on-going professional support between herself and Hal. However, she admitted that her feelings about him were tainted by the fact that she had been fired following his evaluation. However, when asked to describe their relationship, she stated, "I basically only see him when he comes in to observe me." Given the tenuousness of this bond, it was easy for Lauren to dismiss his criticism, despite the fact supervisors other than Hal deemed her instruction problematic.

I don't value your feedback because you're just saying this because you have to

Several topics arose in every conference because they were points of focus Anita had stressed with her administrative council. Table 4.3 notes the occurrence of four "hot" topics that were regularly mentioned.

Table 4.3
Occurrence of "hot" topics in conferences

Conference participants	Questioning strategies/ Broadcast questions	Checks for or assessments of understanding	Closure activity/Exit slip	Student engagement/ Cooperative Learning
Molly, Ruth, and Mike		X	X	X
Lynn and Colleen	X	X	X	X
Grant and Phin				X
Al and Moira	X	X	X	
Lauren and Hal	X	X	X	X
Bartholomew and Brenda		X		X
Holly and Allegra	X	X	X	
Lucy and Anita	X	X	X	X

In an official correspondence with the Upland Hills community, Anita explained that several "research-based interventions" were being incorporated into classroom instruction as part of UHN"s "two-year improvement plan" necessitated by its failure to attain AYP. Below are excerpts from the communiqué that correspond with the topics noted in Table 4.3.

- Throughout a lesson—and at the end of a lesson—faculty members check for understanding among students to determine the degree to which students understand or "are able to do" what was taught.
- [A]ll teachers are required to enroll in the three major professional growth opportunities in the District: *Assessment Literacy*[16], *Project CRISS*[17], and *Cooperative Learning*. (Boyd, 2009)

[16] Based on the work of Richard Stiggins, teachers use assessment tools as part of their instruction. These tools not only measure levels of understanding but also aid attainment of understanding. See http://www.julieboyd.com.au/ILF/pages/members/cats/bkovervus/t_and_learn_pdfs/student_centred_assessment.pdf for a concise but thorough summary.

[17] Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies. The company website http://www.projectcriss.com/what_we_are.php describes a process whereby students learn to "identify which strategies are the most effective. . . integrate new information with prior knowledge . . . [are] involved in their own learning by discussing, writing, and organizing."

Neither questioning strategies nor closure activities were mentioned explicitly, although both of those fall under the broader category of checking for understanding.

Because these issues were part of the school and district‟s improvement plan, they were common knowledge. The faculty was well aware that these issues had been given priority by the administration and that supervisors were expected to look for them in their observations and comment on them in postobservation conferences. As happens to so many good ideas, their constant repetition had rendered them meaningless or contemptible to many faculty members. As I sat in the cafeteria one day, I overheard one teacher remark with patronizing sarcasm, "Now, remember, you have to call on *every* student *every* day." His lunch mate grimaced.

Several teachers questioned whether the criticism they received was prompted by a genuine problem identified in the observed lesson or if it was simply the result of administrative pressure. In Excerpt 20, Colleen addressed the issue of questions and checking for understanding:

Excerpt 20

1	Colleen	Um: .h a little bit about ↑questioning. We talked a little bit about that
2	Lynn	M-hm
3	Colleen	prior too↑ in one of the: and 'n' not that you had time for a bunch of questions. You know
4	Lynn	Right
5	Colleen	it wasn't that type of lesson, but talk to me if any:thing jumped out in that area um when you were lookin' at the no:tes about some of the questions that you: had for the class.
6	Lynn	(1.5) Well, I felt like they were (2.0) they were (.) u:m (2.0) I don't know. They weren't necessarily specifically: like in terms of like a they weren't about expression:↑ They were more abou:t (2.0) understanding the the pa:rt.=It's more like (1.6) um (.4) °I don't know what I'd compare it to° like understandin:g how to solve a a math problem↑ .hh as opposed to:: u:m (.7) like m:aking a piece of art out of that math problem↑ So we weren't really at the art part yet↑ and so

I felt like my questioning was mor:e "Can you sing this correctly?" and it was I wasn't necessarily even asking the question. I was asking them to perform it↑ and that was took the place of a ques[tion↑]

7 Colleen: [Mm-hm↑ Mm-hm↑

8 Lynn Um:

9 (2.0)

10 Colleen: Yeah. (.8) You know just um as I looked through it, the questions were obviously appropriate↑ They wer:e broa:dcast.=If you knew aheada time that it I don't think you did.=I think they were part of what you were doing at the ti:[me.

11 Lynn [Right.

12 Colleen: .hh Um you know I may: um suggest that if you kno:w that ther:e's some sort of (.4) problems in certain areas to plan for a direct question↑=

13 Lynn Sure

14 Colleen: Especially if you know certain people or certain groups might no:t um: kind of *g* that maybe the same kids always answer. (1.5) I don't know that.= I'm just kinda

15 Lynn ↑Sometimes. I do try not to call on the same student↑=

16 Colleen: Mm-hmm

17 Lynn in the same class period, bu:t I also think that there weren't I maybe I didn't provide them with enough opportunities *g* to <get their hands up.=I don't know.> .hh Um

18 Colleen: Yeah. *g* just they were broadcast if you know maybe for future focus maybe we'll put something in there that if you are going to if you do sense there might be questions or if there ar:e to: um: maybe identify and and present different as many kids a voic:e

19 Lynn Su[re↑]

20 Colleen: [In that period as possible.

In our interview, Lynn revealed, "I've been told . . . that [questioning is] something that's being pushed." She suggested that knowing a particular issue was a focus of the administration could be a double-edged sword:

> It *does* make me reflect on how I do it, and I will say that it has made me think about it. But the fact that I *know* that they're being asked to watch for and do that . . . I can anticipate that they'll ask about that.

Teachers‟ awareness of the importance of smart questioning techniques had been heightened, but with this awareness came the potential for opportunistic behaviors.

Lynn speculated, “I could have planted questions and eliminated this whole issue, but I also knew that that wasn‟t going to be the best rehearsal for my kids.” While Lynn‟s professional integrity is laudable, some of her later comments revealed that she had failed to draw a distinction between well-asked questions and unnecessary questions.

In Utterance 5 above, Colleen asks if Lynn recognized any patterns regarding questions in the field notes Colleen provided. After a moderate pause, Lynn attempts to answer, and her response is littered with noticeable pauses. She explained what was going through her head during those pauses:

> Well, I just think it‟s frustrating when I feel like the questions that I‟m using are the questions that are helpful to the class, and I feel like I‟m being asked about using another technique that I feel like is actually going to slow down the rehearsal, so I‟m trying to figure out a way to put it without seeming disrespectful to the idea.

Lynn further clarified that “we‟re really taught as music educators to not stop, that the best rehearsals are the ones where we‟re not speaking as much.” Lynn had conflated the problem of interrupting rehearsal or asking unnecessary questions with that of asking questions in a manner that drew students out and held them accountable.

Colleen either did not recognize or chose not to challenge Lynn‟s interpretation. Colleen‟s speech was rife with hesitation markers, hedges, and generalities, and she appeared extremely desirous that Lynn take up her implicit suggestion in Utterance 5 and relieve her of the responsibility of making the criticism explicit. Particularly noteworthy is the two-second pause at Utterance 9 when neither conversant claimed the speaking floor. In an effort to alleviate her own discomfort yet still issue the critique, Colleen abandons the problem with the actual observed lesson and offers a hypothetical, future lesson for which Lynn could pre-plan her

questions, sidestepping the existing problem with Lynn‟s questioning techniques (U18). Colleen‟s inability or unwillingness to discuss the particular questions Lynn posed to her students and how they might have been used more effectively lend credence to Lynn‟s contention that the subject of questions was raised only to satisfy an administrative fiat.

I don't understand your feedback

Often, teachers either stated outright or demonstrated through their responses that they simply did not know what the supervisor was asking them to do. Miscommunication of this sort could have one of two causes:

1) Limited reflective or interpretive ability on the teacher‟s part, or
2) Absence of verbal clarity on the supervisor‟s part.

Sometimes both causes were present simultaneously.

Absence of verbal clarity

Sometimes supervisors failed to express themselves clearly, often prompted by a desire to avoid committing a face-threatening act. Rather than state a problem directly, supervisors obfuscated, hoping their meaning could be garnered without having to go on record. Colleen provided several crystalline examples of this predicament.

When asked what she would do differently were she to teach the lesson again, Lynn commented that she could not say with certainty that she would make any changes. Although her learning objective was so ambitious that it could not be completed in a single class period, she believed there was value in attempting something so grand. In Excerpt 21 below, Colleen offers an alternative way of looking at lesson design and learning objectives:

Excerpt 21

```
1    °Mm-hm.°
2    Um (.) through (.) in this (.) I made a note on this (.)
3    because (.) you know I was trying to follow through what
     (.) um (.)
4    you know observing many classes
```

5 Som:e people have really s:pecif:ic obje:ctives,
6 you know where in your: um for your lesson, I'm sure you could have broken: down: (.) you know each area or each grou:ping um as I followed.=um
7 Certainly what you did worked. There's not a question.=
8 I guess I would (.) say how do you feel about it at times
9 when you have so much=it was jam packed bell to bell.
10 Talk to me about how do you feel about ↑making some mor:e specific (.) um: kind of objectives=
11 maybe to go back to mor:e to the board.=
12 Or is that something that you've tried↑
13 and (.) <how do you feel about that.>

When asked to interpret the meaning of this passage, Lynn confessed, "I guess like I feel not completely sure what she's asking me." Lynn's confusion is understandable given how Colleen structured her advice.

Colleen begins with a softly spoken acknowledgement token (U1) followed by several false starts (U2), including an attempt to ground her subsequent comments in the empirical data she collected during the observation: "I made a note on this." A number of supervisors employed a variation on this expression as a proxy for "I'm about to issue a criticism." The strength of this technique may lie in the implication that the supervisor is not really criticizing but merely reporting the facts. In Utterance 4, Colleen draws Lynn's attention to the fact that she has observed "many" other teachers. This action appears an effort to provide herself credibility. When interviewed, Colleen claimed she did not see her teaching background in physical education as problematic to observing and evaluating Lynn's teaching. On the other hand, she commented several times during the conference that she was "not a music person," suggesting otherwise.

Having established her credentials, Colleen then frames the use of specific learning objectives as a generally accepted practice, taking care to temper that contention with the inclusion that only "some people" do this (U5). At Utterance 6, Colleen at last suggests that

Lynn could have simplified her objective by breaking it into smaller, more attainable mini-objectives. She does so quite circuitously, however, starting with a hedge ("you know") followed by two abortive attempts to reference Lynn"s teaching ("in your . . . for your lesson . . .) before finally making a vague suggestion about breaking down "areas" or "groupings."

Even this critique is too blunt for Colleen"s comfort, so she immediately retreats from it by assuring Lynn that what she "did worked" (U7). That being the case, the listener must wonder why Colleen feels compelled to suggest alternative behavior, which she continues to do. Interestingly, though, she places the onus for further criticism on Lynn, asking her to "talk to me about how you feel" about making such changes. Colleen even provides Lynn an exit strategy by offering that she may have already tried to do what Colleen has suggested (U12).

Colleen"s circumlocution is what poker players call a "tell."[18] Lynn can sense Colleen"s discomfort and, whether consciously or not, provides a response that shuts down any further criticism. Lynn offers that the sort of specificity Colleen is suggesting can only be expected

> once we have notes and rhythms learned . . . but when we're first learning a piece of music . . . we're going to work on correctly singing our parts from this measure to this measure. I feel like that is actually pretty specific.

Colleen"s response reveals her eagerness to end this line of inquiry: "Got it. That makes sense."

Limited ability on the teacher's part

At other times, communication failures were the result of a teacher"s limited ability to make sense of the advice supervisors offered. Particularly if supervisors were trying to use the Socratic Method to elicit teacher understanding, the combination of limited teacher reception and indirect supervisor feedback coalesced into utter confusion. Moira and Al represented such a situation.

[18] Unconscious physical behaviors or tics that reveal a player is bluffing.

In Excerpt 17 cited earlier, Al demonstrated a propensity to provide "talking points" in lieu of reflection on his practice. Moira asked him how he approached lesson planning, and Al provided some information about collaborating with his PLC team members. Moira recognized that her question had not received an answer and rephrased it more directly: "How do you make the decision about what you're gonna do in those in those 50 minutes?" In Excerpt 22, Al again provides a talking point response, somewhat vaguer and less polished than his previous effort:

Excerpt 22

1 Well, some of it is [that] you know what you're comfortable doing and what your strengths are. At the same time, though, there's a lot of different stuff out there, and Isabel uses different approaches from Tony, and I use different approaches from them,

2 so sometimes you do what Isabel's got in mind this day. I'll try it out. You know what I mean? We'll give it a go and try different aspects out just because maybe I know this works decently well or I know it works pretty well. But, at the same time, what if something over here that they're doing is gonna work even better? So maybe we'll try that out . . . Let's try new stuff.

3 Let's try changing things up and seeing how the kids respond because you can always go back and try and fix it.

Al begins with an assertion that teaching style is idiosyncratic and that he appreciates the differences between himself and his colleagues (U1). He returns to his commitment to collaboration and innovation (U2). Finally, he implies that the choices and changes are predicated on the success or failure of the students (U3). Al has been talking for almost four minutes and still has not responded to Moira's question.

At no point does Moira ask specific follow-up questions to draw from Al what he means by the statements he made. Instead she rephrases the question a third time:

> I guess what I'm trying to get at is to see [if] you ever stop and say, "Okay, I need these kids to understand heat and temperature." [How do you do that] besides asking them the definitions? . . . I think like that's one of the things if I had to tell you what your future focuses are

> right now, **that's** one of the things I think you have to start thinking about in terms of planning.

Moira has made lesson planning an area of future focus in Al‟s evaluation. However, she has failed to name it explicitly, using the pronoun "that" without a clearly defined antecedent. Furthermore, Al has provided no evidence that he has a systematic lesson planning strategy. It is not even entirely clear whether he realizes the importance of such a strategy. In our one-on-one interview, I asked Al what he understood Moira‟s main concerns to be, and he mentioned that they "talked about [how to approach] the structure of the lesson a little bit differently to get to that higher level questioning." This remark indicates that Al sees a different, smaller concern than Moira does. In addition, even if Al had ascertained that Moira was referring to lesson planning in the future focus statement above, he would have had little direction as to how to improve that aspect of his teaching.

I have a lot of growing to do and . . .

All but 1 of the 17 people interviewed for this study believed in the potential for clinical supervision to help teachers improve their professional practice. Among the purposes teachers and supervisors attributed to the process were to:

- "point out deficiencies" and "offer some pointers";
- " help you see what you‟re doing well but also guide you into the new ways of teaching if they‟re needed";
- "say, „These are the things I see [in your teaching]. What did you see?‟";
- "self-assess and have others assess you";
- "get a[nother] set of eyes in there and another set of ears to hear and see what‟s going on and where the teacher can improve;" and,
- "get a sense of whether the students are understanding the lesson"

Anita remarked in our interview, "I haven‟t found too many perfect teachers." The implication of this comment was that great teaching was not a state of being but a state of constant becoming.

There was an expectation at UHN on both the teachers‟ and supervisors‟ parts that the observation cycle would invariably result in recommendations for change. Some teachers received *a lot* of recommendations of varying degrees of difficulty and urgency. Some of those teachers left their conferences empowered to make these changes, eager to do so, and positive about their futures as educators. Others felt defeated, overwhelmed, and in doubt about their fitness for the profession.

I have a lot of growing to do, and I don't feel equipped to do it

The negative feelings that the latter group experienced appeared to have little to do with the number of critical comments leveled at them during the conference. Lucy, for example, received nine specific criticisms from Anita, the most of any teacher in the sample, yet she commented as she was leaving her conference, "You gave me some really good ideas that are totally manageable. And they‟re totally realistic, so that‟s great. So I‟m excited." By contrast, Hal commented critically on only one area of focus with Lauren, yet, when I asked her if she was pursuing another teaching position for the following year, she began to cry and confessed, "A lot of times after observations, I feel like I shouldn‟t be teaching at all, that I‟m a terrible teacher, and I shouldn‟t even be allowed in the classroom."

Teachers who experienced a diminution in their sense of self-efficacy following conferences cited one of two issues:

- Overwhelmingly negative feedback (and few helpful suggestions)
- Many helpful suggestions (and no opportunity to process or prioritize them)

Overwhelmingly negative feedback. Lauren described postobservation conferences as "about 5 minutes of . . . „Here‟s what you did well,‟ and then 45 minutes of . . . „This is what you need to improve on.‟" While it is tempting to dismiss this comment as hyperbole, a review of her conference with Hal lends some credence to it. Excerpt 23 takes place at the very start of the

conference, after Hal asks Lauren to "go through" the questions for reflection. The first question asks her to "assess the strengths of the lesson":

Excerpt 23

1	Lauren	I thought one of 'em: was meeting the objective and tying it to: the exit slip (.) for (.) the assessment (.) that we did that class.=So the first day wa:s (.) a lot of demos and talking and .hh um think-pair-share, and then the exit slip (1.7) 24 out of the 26 students (.4) aced it. (.5) Um and then two students that (.) didn't (.) do too well, I was able to talk to the:m (.) on Friday (.3) when we were doing the (.3) stations. (.3)
2	Hal	Oka[y,]
3	Lauren	[Kinda talked to them about it. (.6) Um (1.8) and then tha:t (.6) now that we were having this [postobservation conference] so far so much further later (.) um=
4	Hal	Right
5	Lauren	(1.3) Those students (.4) did (.) really well on their (.2) quiz that was (.3) similar to that exit slip. (.5) So that carried over. It wasn't just a (.) one day thing.
6	Hal	[Good.]
7	Lauren	[That was good to see.
8	Hal	M-hm, absolutely.

Lauren's learning objective on Day 1 was to have the students in her physics class describe the characteristics of uniform circular motion. The exit slip to which she referred in Utterance 1 asked the students to use what they had learned in class to calculate the velocity of an object moving in a circle. Only 2 of her 26 students failed to demonstrate mastery of this concept. Lauren provides a short pause after delivering this news, but Hal does not take the speaking floor, so she addresses the issue of the two students who were unsuccessful. In Utterance 5, she lets Hal know that these students performed well on a summative assessment, in part, presumably, because of Lauren's attention and use of formative assessment data. These indicators of successful teaching and learning behavior are met with a "Good" from Hal.

In fairness to Hal, he had given Lauren the speaking floor and may have been consciously abstaining from voicing an opinion for fear of impeding her reflection. On the other hand, Hal‟s written evaluation included the comment, “Although the objective was clearly written on the board, the content was delivered in such a way that made it difficult to visualize based on the complexity of the topic.” Hal also noted in writing Lauren‟s use of the exit slips, but no mention of their 92% success rate appears in the evaluation.

Lauren‟s debriefing took about seven minutes after which Hal claimed the speaking floor to offer his thoughts on the observed lesson. Excerpt 24 is fairly representative of the entire conference. The complete transcript ran 393 lines, 120 of which were given over to discussing a single student, Darrin.

Excerpt 24

1	Hal	Okay,.hh hh. Good? Nice reflections,
2		U:m: (1.5) you know I think you you you pulled out of the the no:tes a lot of the things that .hh that I (.) that I noticed as well.=
3		Um you know I thought the the pla:nning↑ uh you did a nice job planning the two days↑ Not easy concepts for them↑
4	Lauren	Yeah
5	Hal	Uh but you you identified some areas where given the opportunity to do it again, you'd make some changes↓=so that .hh you know I agree.=I think there's .hh uh there's room there for: hh. especially that first day to make it a little more interactive and (.) engaging for them,
6	Lauren	°m-hm°
7	Hal	Um and the:n: .hh um you talked about Darrin↑ ((laugh)) and the frustrations you're having with him↑ .hh U:m: (.2) and tha:t that was kinda my: (2.0): focus and and and re re reviewing the notes again .hh u:m and knowing that you struggled with Darrin (.) the last time I observed, u:m (1.2) knowing that's .hh you know you you can ↑<u>target</u> him,(.8)
8	Lauren	[Yeah]
9	Hal	[You know because I think .hh um in in my

		previous observation I I noted that (.) his: behavior↑ (1.0) um obviously impacts everybody else's learning.
10	Lauren	Yeah
11	Hal	And it's certainly impacting your .hh I think your credibility as well↓ You know, when when he gets to do:
12		not that you're intentionally↑ allowing him to do those thing[s=
13	Lauren	[Yeah]
14	Hal	but he is doing 'em
15	Lauren	Yeah
16	Hal	Um without much consequence, um *tst* I think he:'s (1.3) he feels like he has a lot of freedom.
17	Lauren	Yeah
18	Hal	And I think the other kids in in you know when he makes comments↑ or .hh yawns out lou:d↑ or: .hh um you know breaks out a muffin or something they they I think they: (2.0) the impression that I get when I watched the other students around him is like, "Oh, there's there goes Darrin again."
19	Lauren	°Yeah°
20	Hal	Um so (1.5) you know you you're doing a nice job↑ with the content↑
21		Um I think you're: the focus um rea:lly needs to be on the classroom management stuff.
22	Lauren	°Yeah°

Hal begins his feedback with an acknowledgement token followed by an audible inhale and exhale, possibly indicating that he is mentally preparing his next remarks. There follow two general, moderately positive evaluative comments about what Lauren has just said (U1). In the next utterance, Hal provides more specific feedback about what made Lauren's reflection "good" and "nice"—she mentioned the same things that he commented on in his field notes. In Utterance 3, Hal gives Lauren another compliment, this time about her planning of the observed lesson, although he makes no specific observations to support his contention that she did a "nice job." Following Lauren's agreement token, Hal introduces the topic of what could have been

done better. He cites the low levels of student engagement (U5) and then moves on to an extended discussion of Darrin.

Unlike Hal‟s positive comments, his observations about Darrin‟s behavior are extremely specific. These observations were repeated in the written evaluation:

- "Darrin yawns out loud frequently."
- "Darrin was very vocal (thinks out loud) without concern for others."
- "Darrin took out some blueberry muffins un-wrapped them and offered some to me (observer) and ate them at his table."

In Utterances 9 and 11, Hal asserts that Darrin‟s behavior is a detriment to the other students and to Lauren‟s credibility. As evidence, he provides his interpretation of how the other students react to Darrin‟s antics (U18). Following this spate of specific and fairly harsh criticism, Hal offers that Lauren is "doing a nice job with the content" (U20).

It must be noted that during Lauren‟s initial debriefing, Hal allowed her to talk uninterrupted until she began to reflect on her troubles with Darrin. At that point, he asked several follow-up questions. A quarter of her debriefing was spent explaining her many attempts to effect a change in this young man‟s behavior. She cited several calls home during which she discussed Darrin‟s behavior with his mother. She also elaborated on how she dealt with Darrin after catching him cheating on a test. None of Lauren‟s interventions appear to have had any effect. On the other hand, Hal had no better luck. He noted in Lauren‟s final evaluation: "[Darrin] was leaning back in his chair dangerously far and I (observer) told him not to lean back in his chair and he replied, „Great, now I have two people yelling at me not to do that.‟"

The implications of Darrin‟s comment are numerous. First, Lauren clearly has attempted to correct his behavior before. Second, even the presence of a second adult sitting in close proximity to him has no impact on his behavior. Third, Lauren is not the only authority figure to whom Darrin feels no obligation to behave respectfully. Hal, who is older, physically larger, and

more experienced, has the same lack of success correcting Darrin‟s behavior as does a 23-year old, 115-pound, first-year teacher. Hal does not seem to recognize the irony of castigating Lauren for her failure to perform a task at which he, too, failed. He returns to the issue of Darrin twice more during the conference.

As mentioned previously, Lauren knew her classroom management skills could use some work. However, there are four domains in Danielson‟s (2007) *Framework for Teaching*, and Hal‟s observations in the conference focused almost solely on the second, Classroom Environment. Hal provided little in the way of guidance as to how Lauren might overcome her deficiencies. After acknowledging all the efforts Lauren has made to gain control over Darrin, conceding that "obviously [Darrin‟s] got an attitude," Hal stated that Lauren "need[s] to get a grasp on" her classroom management problems. Meanwhile, the things that Lauren did well were given minimal attention and remarked on only vaguely.

Whither praise? The issue of positive feedback in postobservation conferences proved more complex than I expected. The emphasis on teacher reflection and on eliciting rather than telling caused many supervisors to avoid making unequivocally positive statements. Supervisors who wished to draw attention to something well-done resorted to some laborious and not always successful techniques. Excerpt 25 is an example of one such instance.

Excerpt 25

1	Mike	You talked about how the kids in all the classes initially were kind .hh of afraid or scared but then quickly (.6) got okay with [the activity]. Do you think there was anything in how <u>you</u> set up the activity↑ that allowed them (.7) to not (.6) you know not be afraid or to allow them to be successful in in putting it together↓
2	Molly	In might have been better: if they had more time to look at each line and maybe s:ay↑ the lines to their partner↑ like take turns

```
          thinking↑ . . .
3   Mike  *g* And I guess I didn't (.2) state my
          question=
4   Molly Okay
5   Mike  The best way.  I wasn't looking for: a way for
          you to make it better.
6   Molly Okay.
```

In Utterance 1, Mike asks Molly to reflect on the fail-safes she implemented that allowed students to experience success in their efforts. Molly does not hear this as a request to comment on the strength of her lesson plan. Instead, she offers further self-criticism, suggesting that she could have structured the lesson differently to aid the students" comprehension (U2). Mike sees that he has been misunderstood and attempts to rephrase the question.

I asked Mike and Molly, individually, to listen to Mike"s original question and offer an interpretation of it. Both remembered it as a criticism. When I asked Molly why she assumed Mike"s question was critical, she admitted,

> I guess I feel like some of these observations are meant to get you to reflect and ask yourself what can you do to improve, and it"s kind of, I don"t want to say *implied*, but you"re not gonna go in with just glowing praise. There are gonna be criticisms. So I guess I just kind of prepared myself for that, just to be ready.

I then asked Mike why he had phrased what was quite obviously a compliment in question form. He explained,

> I *was* trying to give her a compliment. You"re exactly right. . . . She"s one of those staff members who . . . literally the night before she"s still tweaking in her mind, "How can I help these kids do better on this lesson?" . . . So I was I was thinking . . . this was probably like 10:00 last night the light bulb went on and she decided, "Hey, I"m gonna do this thing with the strips, put ‚em in bags," and it was absolutely critical to the success of that part of the lesson, and I was just trying to get her to see how important that was. [Int.: And did you want her to come to that realization on her own? Is that why you phrased it as a question?] Exactly. I was trying to draw that from her as opposed to me telling her, "Hey, this was really good."

Mike recognized and appreciated the amount of effort and time Molly expended not just on this lesson but on all her lesson planning. Yet he did not think it good practice simply to say so.

The assumption that even praise should emanate from within the teacher appeared again in my interview with Anita. During her conference with Lucy, Anita issued several direct compliments. At one point, she told Lucy that she was very good about moving around the classroom so that students did not feel physically isolated from her. Upon listening to herself say this, though, Anita critiqued her own critique:

> I could have asked her to talk to me a little bit about proximity . . . I mean I felt like it was okay that I was giving her feedback and affirming something that she did very well because not all teachers do it nearly as well as she did, but I might have been able to have her pull that out.

Mike and Anita‟s comments suggest their belief that teachers will not experience professional growth unless they construct their understanding. All awareness, even of what they exhibit mastery of, must be self-constructed.

Too many recommendations and no opportunity to process them. Al expressed frustration with the amount of feedback he received, remarking on the "zillion things that they want you to do that they list . . . on the areas of future focus. . . .You know there‟s like 20 bullet points." Moira was committed to fixing Al‟s deficiencies in lesson planning. In Excerpt 26, which picks up following Excerpt 22, she provided him with a series of suggestions regarding his lesson on the principles of thermodynamics:

Excerpt 26

1	Moira	And I think even, Al, um (.6) I think that that's a great example of what (.2) you could have used to get them to critically think .hh because what did you do for your kick-off question on Day One.= You asked them to do what↓
2	Al	Describe the difference between[n]
3	Moira	[Between the two.
4	Al	Yeah.
5	Moira	So what if you instead did your kick-off↑ question with that demo or you could put an ice cube on the ta:b[le↑]
6	Al	[Sure=
7	Moira	Or you put an ice cube on a hot plate .hh and you

		said "Here's your kick off (.) question: explain: what is h:appening to me .hh not to me ((laughs))
8	Al	[To the ice cube.]
9	Moira	[Explain what's happening to the ice cube or to your hand↑ or to Robbie's hand whoever you <u>did</u> it t[o.]
10	Al	[Sure.]
11	Moira	.hh And then↑ from there↓ have them with their partner:s use that demo to figure out↑ (.8) what those definitions: of <u>heat</u> are.=
12	Al	[Right.]
13	Moira	['Cause then .hh they have some (.) thing since it is so abstract↑ like you [<u>said</u>↑]
14	Al	[Now that I have some [more]
15	Moira	[They have something <u>tangible</u> and concrete to go and <u>you</u>↑ have something tangible and concrete throughout the whole lesson↑ to go back "<u>Hey</u>, remember at the start of the lesson when we did <u>this</u>↑". . . But if <u>you</u> think about assessment literacy an' you're as you're working on it if <u>you</u> did that demo what would that demo be?
16	Al	(1.8) Like a perfor—[it—you know]
17	Moira	[Yeah, it would [be]
18	Al	[A performance.][Right?]
19	Moira	[Yeah. It would be an assessment <u>for</u>[19].
20	Al	For. [Oh sure.]
21	Moira	[So you do that with them and walk them through it. .hh Maybe give 'em another scenario for homework↑ as an assessment <u>for</u> on their (.5) own. .hh
22	Al	Ye[ah.]
23	Moira	[And then guess what their <u>quiz</u> is? You do <u>another</u> one in cla:ss and you model it for them.

After quickly affirming the value of the demonstration Al described to her, Moira provides an explanation of how he might have used the demonstration differently (U5, 7, 9), how he can integrate cooperative learning strategies into the lesson (U11), a rationale for why these

[19] An assessment for understanding, as opposed to an assessment <u>of</u> understanding, i.e., a formative vs. summative assessment.

suggestions are instructionally sound (U13, 15), a review of types of assessments (U15-20), integration of the demonstration with homework (U21), and the summative evaluation (U23).

Like his students, Al struggles to demonstrate mastery of a complex topic—teaching for understanding. While Moira provides pedagogically sound advice for improving Al‟s students‟ understanding using constructivist methods, she does not support Al‟s learning in the same fashion. Al appears overwhelmed by suggestions, providing many agreement tokens (U4, 6, 10, 12, 22). At Utterance 14, he begins to offer a more substantive response, and Moira cuts him off.

Al compares the role of a supervisor to that of a coach, explaining how he approaches skill development with his own athletes:

> I have [the 100-meter dash] broken down into 10 things. If you‟ve mastered the first three, now you‟re ready for the fourth thing. Until that point, you‟re not ready because you can‟t do some of *these* things unless you‟ve mastered *these*.

While the work of teachers is significantly more complex than that of 100-meter runners and may not be amenable to the type of compartmentalization that Al would like, that does not mean Al‟s objections are without merit. There is, if not hypocrisy, irony in the manner that Moira "coaches" Al, demonstrated quite clearly in Excerpt 27. After outlining how Al could use the demonstration more effectively, Moira then leads him through a series of questions intended to provoke him to think about lesson design differently:

Excerpt 27

1	Moira	So when should you have used that?
2	Al	First. Right off the bat. Yeah.
3	Moira	With your first law of thermodynamics because had you just done that and said, "Somebody explain to me what's happening here."
4	Al	Yeah
5	Moira	So do you see how like that's looking at your lessons differently, Al?
6	Al	Right.

In Utterance 3, Moira counsels Al to ask his students to demonstrate their knowledge by "explain[ing] to [him] what's happening." However, in Utterance 5, Moira asks Al a yes-no question regarding his understanding of her advice, accepts his affirmative response, and does not follow up to assure herself that he actually does understand "how . . . that's looking at [his] lessons differently." Moira uses the same techniques to instruct Al that Al uses with his students, a technique that Moira has implied is ineffective.

The combination of multiple suggestions and no opportunity to process them leads Al to feel overwhelmed and angry. In our interview, he pleaded:

> Tell me where you want me to start. Don't just throw [these suggestions] out there . . . I find that doesn't give me any direction at all. I don't know what you want then. . . There's so many initiatives and so many different things that they want you to be doing. Well, tell me the things that are very important that you want me to be doing, and I'll try to, if I can, tackle all those.

In her well-intentioned zeal to "fix" Al, Moira may be working against her own long-term goals. Al's comments indicate feelings of helplessness, whereas clinical supervision should render teachers more self-directed.

I have growing to do and I feel equipped to do it

As documented throughout this chapter, it is easy to criticize others. In an effort to avoid becoming part of the problem, it seemed incumbent that I note conference behaviors that led to increased levels of teacher efficacy and specific intent on the teachers' parts to change classroom practice. The common thread in the conferences that yielded these positive results was a combination of specific criticism with specific recommendations for improvement. Options included specific praise and verbal clarity.

Excerpt 28 is taken from Lucy and Anita's conference. Lucy had offered her senior composition class some time to get started on their homework, and most of them failed to use it well. Anita does not shy away from commenting on this, but quickly offers a solution:

Excerpt 28

1 On the second day, I think it was just too much time↓ and too unstructured. In terms of working on the outline 'n that. Uh, they still may've had some ↑questions=
2 I'm wondering if maybe you should've taken 'em through um a sampl:e↑ (.) outline of a so so so say a'right so now: as a group we're doin' this essay on: (.) lesson learned 'r whatever. . . And take them through a little bit about whachu mean by quote the outline. And take them through each (.) point . . .
3 Okay? Then have them↑ work individually. on their own. through those first two [points]. . . You give 'em three minutes to do it or four minutes to do it.
4 Now share with your partner↑ . . .
5 and then >so they do some individual [work].<
6 They go and it's kind of in those quick bursts of time. .hh I would say you're gonna be better (.) with that more often than not.

Anita is extremely plain-spoken, characterizing Lucy‟s lesson as "unstructured" and implying that she failed to provide the guidance her students needed to complete the assignment (U1). What prevents Anita‟s feedback from being destructive, however, is that she immediately follows this comment with an alternative. She equips Lucy with a template for future classes in which new skills are 1) presented, 2) modeled (U2), 3) practiced individually (U3), and 4) processed collaboratively (U4), with steps 1-4 repeated as needed. In this way, students are supported in their learning and given less opportunity to make poor use of their time.

Without stimulated recall, Lucy commented favorably, and humorously, on this particular advice, which she had already put into practice with positive results:

> Something she said was perhaps give them five minutes, "Okay, write your thesis." Then you go over the thesis, talk about it, think-pair-share, five more minutes, do the next step. So . . . it‟s my first year. I‟m learning. But that‟s obviously something that . . . now I do it.—And it works! Who‟d‟athought?

Even though Anita did not elicit this understanding from Lucy, Lucy absorbed both the how and the why of this instructional practice.

Ruth and Mike"s combined advice to Molly was also well-received. In Excerpt 29, they explain the benefits of using what they term the whole-part-whole technique:

Excerpt 29

1	Ruth	Play the play the entire song through↑ once first to let them get a feel for the whol:e song↑ And then do th[e:=
2	Molly	[Ye[ah]
3	Ruth	[Part by part↑ Just (.) you know and it's just try different things and see what you like but just because .hh the initial shock of those first f-f- coupla lines it's like Whoa↓ wha[t=
4	Molly	[Ye[ah]
5	Ruth	[You know and then if they had heard the whole thing↑ sometimes it .hh you know hear a word or two or get the feel for it↑ and then they sort of know what they're getting into↑ . . .
6	Molly	Yeah, that >would've been good before passing< out the lyrics and all, just ask if they recognize any (.) any words. I guess I was just worried about them getting sick of the song↑ 'cause I knew I would be playing it a couple of times↑ and it i::s something that gets stuck in your head↑ [which is so]
7	Ruth	[Excellent↑ You wa(h)nt it to >g(h)et stu(h)ck in their he(h)ads↑<
8	Mike	Kinda like I'm just a bill stuck on Capitol Hill::↑ Conjunction junction what's your function. >You know what I mean?<
9	Molly	Yeah.
10	Mike	Th-there are some things↑ that are probably okay↑ to have kids you know stuck in their head. But u:h .hh and I think (.) what I saw from the kids when you first hit the um tst the player button for them to really be l—you know looking for the lyrics or whatever it was like ((imitating student reaction)) Oh my [God. That goes by fast.]
11	Ruth	[WHAT was THAT.] Yeah
12	Mike	You know whereas if you played the song↑
13	Molly	Yeah
14	Mike	The shock is already worn off at a point where

they're really not being asked or expected to do anything yet↑

15 Molly M-hm

16 Mike And so now when you say okay we're gonna play the first three lines, they're they're kind of ready for that quick pace

17 Molly Yeah

18 Mike of picking out phrase or words or whatever to (.) move their lyrics over onto their desks in the right order.

Administrator speech predominates, but there is a definite sense Molly is being talked *to*, not *at*. Molly is given the opportunity to respond to the advice and, although Ruth interrupts her, the interruption indicates that she has heard Molly. Additionally, in Utterances 7-11, the trio shares a laugh. Ruth puts a positive spin on Molly"s fear of the song getting stuck in the students" heads which Mike bolsters by citing the lyrics of two popular *Schoolhouse Rock*© tunes. Ruth and Mike also adopt the personae of the students, jockeying for floor space in a bid to imitate their shocked reactions to the song (U10-11).

As was the case with Lucy and Anita, Ruth and Mike do not attempt to elicit this understanding from Molly; they simply recommend a course of action. Yet it does not appear to affect negatively Molly"s desire to take that action or her understanding of why the action is appropriate. I asked Molly in our interview whether there were changes she planned to implement as a result of her conference with Ruth and Mike. Without stimulated recall, she explained,

> Their suggestion [was] to actually play the song first so that [the students] could hear it, get a feel for how the song goes because, when I played it for them, it does go fast . . . [and] they kind of panicked a little . . . whereas if they had heard it once first they would have a feel for how the song goes and then they"d be ready.

Molly asserted she would "definitely . . . follow [this] suggestion."

Although perhaps coincidence, all the successful conferences were with language teachers and conducted by supervisors who, likewise, were or are language teachers. This could

have implications for future research and practice. It also cannot be ignored that the three teachers who had successful conferences all demonstrated high levels of ability. Observation of their practice, review of their written evaluations, and discussions with their supervisors support this contention. Given that some of the teachers who experienced unsuccessful conferences were also highly capable, teaching ability may be a necessary but insufficient component of a successful conference.

Chapter Summary

Postobservation conferences were comprised of supervisor and teacher talk. Despite the emphasis on teacher reflection, supervisor speech tended to predominate. The average supervisor spoke 58% of the time, although some spoke two and a half times as much as the teacher with whom they were conferring.

Supervisor speech

Supervisor discourse tended to be one of three types: questions, directions, or commendations. Questions could serve many functions. At times, they opened the floor for discussion, as in the case of invitations to reflect or requests for debriefing. At other times, they were used to solicit further information or reflection from teachers. Finally, questions might be used to mask a more directive remark, although the disguise was rarely successful.

Directions encompassed both advice and commands. Advice might be either prospective or retrospective. While prospective advice could be quite specific, it was applicable to a multitude of situations, making it likely that teachers could apply it in the future. Retrospective advice focused on how the observed lesson might have been improved. Its future applicability was dependent on the teacher‟s ability to extract from it transferrable concepts. Commands were rare, probably due to the supervisors‟ desire to establish a collaborative environment in the

conference. This desire could cause supervisors to employ excessive hedging and other redressive actions when issuing a command, which did little to mask the command and at the same time undermined the supervisors‟ credibility.

Finally, supervisors provided commendations. Some did so ritualistically as part of the "commendation" portion of the conference. Other commendations were forced when supervisors could not find much on which to remark favorably. Negative praise involved the observation that bad things did not happen because the teacher did not neglect to perform some important task. Finally, genuine praise noted specific constructive teaching behaviors and how they positively affected students.

Teacher Talk

Teacher talk was either reflection or pseudo-reflection. Reflection involved a nonlinear, iterative process during which teachers spoke about what they had done during the lesson, why they made the choices they did, and what effect those choices had. Reflective speech revealed knowledge about students and pedagogy and how the two could be or had been used in tandem.

Pseudo-reflection was of two general types: story-telling and talking points. In the former, teachers provided detailed descriptions of their behaviors, including those that preceded or followed what occurred during the observed lesson. Absent from story-telling might be evidence that these behaviors had the desired effect or that the teacher was cognizant of why these behaviors were desirable. Talking points entailed extensive discussion of school- or district-wide initiatives. Teachers cited these initiatives but provided little evidence that they understood why the initiatives were worthwhile or how they dovetailed specifically with their own instruction.

Meanings Made

Occasionally, teachers and supervisors left the conferences with similar visions of what occurred. More often, however, teachers constructed meanings that supervisors had neither intended nor desired. Below are the most common unintended meanings teachers created.

- I don‟t value your feedback;
- I don‟t understand your feedback; and,
- I have a lot of growing to do.

Some teachers voiced the sentiment that they felt equipped to make those changes, and others did not.

Teachers who did not value their supervisors‟ feedback cited one of three reasons. One dyad had experienced negative interpersonal interactions that had not been resolved. Thus, the teacher was inclined to distrust the supervisor‟s motives and filter everything she said through a negative lens. Several teachers cited a lack of knowledge on the supervisor‟s part about their day-to-day classroom practice. The observation provided only a "snapshot" that they felt was not necessarily representative of their abilities and growth. Finally, some teachers felt their supervisor‟s feedback was motivated not by a genuine need but by top-down pressure to focus on particular initiatives. Teachers were able to dismiss this advice as "talking points" or "toeing the party line."

Lack of comprehension could originate in either the teacher or the supervisor. Teachers sometimes demonstrated a lack of cognitive ability. They were unresponsive to supervisors‟ questions, presumably not out of intransigence but because they lacked the ability to "get it." Deficiencies were not helped by supervisors who couched their advice in multiple layers of politeness strategies and other obfuscation, rendering their speech, at worst, unintelligible, at best, cryptic.

Teachers who felt ill-equipped to make the recommended changes cited two major reasons. Either supervisors had offered an excessive amount of criticism without a correspondingly excessive number of helpful suggestions, or supervisors had offered a plethora of helpful suggestions, causing teachers to experience cognitive paralysis. Preparedness to make recommended changes appeared the result of very specific criticism coupled with equally specific advice to remedy the deficit.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover what occurred during postobservation conferences between teachers and their supervisors and then to determine the sources of any disparities in the meanings these individuals constructed from their interactions. I audio-recorded and analyzed the postobservation conferences of 7 teacher-supervisor dyads and 1 triad, as well as individual interviews with each of the 17 participants. Through analytic induction, I developed numerous findings discussed in detail and then summarized in Chapter 4.

Discussion

The three conceptual frameworks upon which this study was built were hermeneutics, conversation and discourse analysis, and politeness theory. Before addressing how the study can strengthen the field of instructional supervision, I wish to return to these frameworks and examine how they inform or are informed by the study.

Hermeneutics

Figure 3.1, reproduced below, presents a model of interpretation wherein the interpreter cycles continually among her preconceptions, her observations, the tradition within which her observations take place, and changes in her perception of both the observed text and the tradition. In Chapter 3, I suggested that this model would require revision to accommodate a second and third interpreter, all working simultaneously to understand each other.

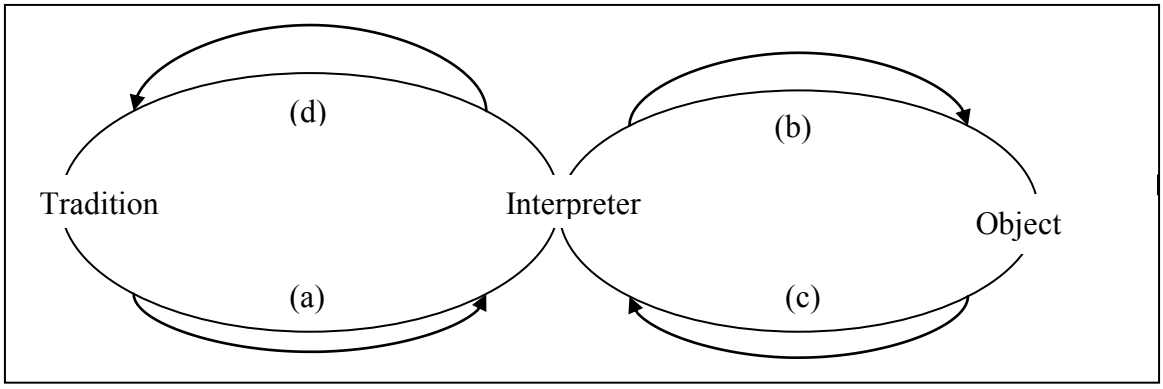

Figure 3.1. The Hermeneutic Figure-Eight (adapted from Gallagher, 1992, p. 106).

I attempted to maintain hermeneutic awareness throughout the process of data collection, analysis, and reporting. I believe I succeeded. As I journeyed through this study, my understanding of supervision and teaching, as well as of my participants, changed. My participants did not all put forth similar efforts to understand each other. Granted, I had the benefit of explicit knowledge beforehand that I should remain open to changing my views. Furthermore, I was not contractually mandated to undertake this study; I did it by choice.

That said, I must have assumed that, in an environment as professional and progressive as that of UHN, the individuals would intuit that one of their tasks was the remain intellectually flexible. Although I noticed this absence more often in supervisors, teachers were not immune to an unquestioned defense of their preconceptions. This stance made it difficult to assimilate feedback that failed to conform to expectations. If, for example, supervisors expected teachers to check for understanding through the use of questioning techniques, and teachers used some other method, supervisors might be inclined to view that as a deficit—the teacher failed to ask questions—rather than a difference.

In general, rather than communication that took place in a recursive fashion, the interactions I witnessed were more linear. Shannon and Weaver"s (1949) mathematical

communication model (Figure 5.1) most nearly represents the interactions that took place between study participants.

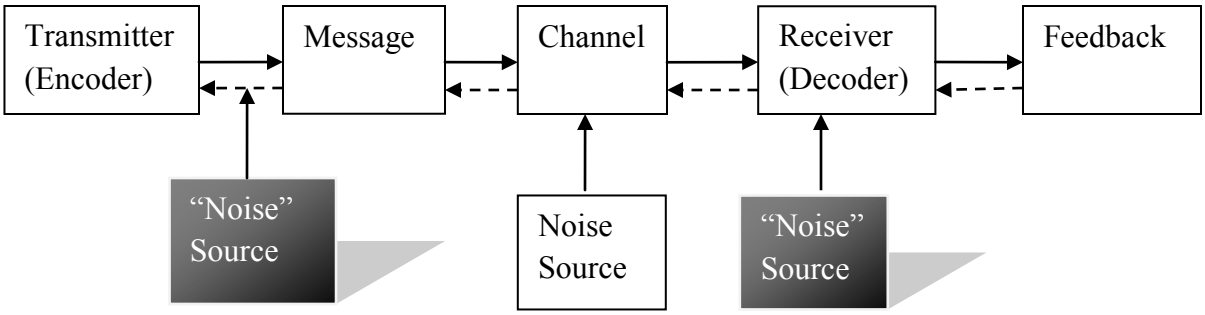

Figure 5.1. Mathematical model of communication. (Adapted from Shannon and Weaver, 1949, p. 34)

A transmitter related a message by means of a channel, usually speech, to a receiver who then offered feedback. In some cases, the feedback became a new message, turning the receiver into the transmitter. The dotted arrows represent this scenario. Sometimes, however, the interaction terminated with an acknowledgement token such as "Okay," and no further interaction ensued.

CA, DA, and Politeness Theory

The "noise source" to which Shannon and Weaver (1949) referred was a literal source of sound that would enable the receiver to hear the message. I have added a second, metaphorical "noise" source, denoted by the shadowed text boxes. This noise is the history, preconceptions, emotional baggage, and other environmental and contextual factors that affect how the sender issues and how the listener receives the message. This noise merits further study as it appears to have an immense impact on the effectiveness of conference communication. Not only does it affect an individual"s desire to act upon recommendations, it actually appears to change substantively how recommendations are understood. It is one thing for a teacher to refuse a supervisor"s advice from conscious contrariness. It is quite another to "hear" something entirely different from what the supervisor said or meant.

Among the most obvious manifestations of noise was excessive use of politeness strategies. Appropriate levels of politeness make civilized social interactions possible. Beyond a certain point, however, politeness becomes an impediment to rather than an enhancement of conversation. Brown and Levinson (1979) explained that "people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others' faces" (p. 61). Some supervisors appeared to anticipate a severe counteroffensive from those teachers to whom they issued face threats. This anxiety may have triggered the use of multiple politeness strategies, rendering their speech unclear. Although humility is an admirable quality, supervisors must resolve their insecurities prior to conferring with teachers. When redressive actions are used almost entirely for purposes of self-defense rather than graciousness, they cease to be polite.

Responding to the Supervision Literature

Although a number of my findings are supported by the extant literature on teacher supervision, at least one challenges this literature. Still others bring up issues I did not find in my study of the literature.

Confirming the literature

The importance of establishing a culture of trust and respect (Blumberg, 1980; Rosenholtz, 1989; Zepeda, 2007) between the supervisor and the teacher was evident in the findings. One reason teachers devalued their supervisor‟s feedback was a strained interpersonal relationship between them that predated the conference. Because the teacher personally distrusted the supervisor, anything the supervisor said was met with suspicion.

The need for supervision to be a frequent, on-going process rather than an annual ritual (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998) was also supported by my data. A number of teachers used the term “snapshot” to describe the limited insight into their practice provided by an observation. Several

teachers were able to dismiss supervisors‟ recommendations because the teachers believed the supervisors were not familiar enough with their practice to render an evaluation of it.

Some supervisors appeared to suffer from role conflict, role ambiguity, and role stress (Bacharach et al., 1990; Kahn & Wolfe, 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970). At Upland Hills North (UHN), postobservation conferences were part of the official appraisal process. They resulted in formal evaluations that, in turn, led to decisions about retention, promotion, and firing. Supervisors seemed eager to downplay this facet of the job, emphasizing teacher ownership of the conference and allowing teacher reflection to drive conference content.

The need to differentiate supervisory styles based on teacher ability (Glickman et al., 2005; Glatthorn, 1997) was apparent in the data. When the knowledge or reflective capacity required for understanding a concept outstripped a teacher‟s capacity, such teachers were unable to make use of their supervisor‟s advice. This problem was exacerbated by supervisors‟ reluctance to make direct recommendations, an outgrowth of the professed intention to grant teachers ownership of the conference.

Cogan‟s (1973) insistence that a supervisor‟s first concern must be with maintaining the individual dignity of the teacher was supported by the findings. Also apparent was the need to leverage teachers‟ strengths as a means of improving areas of weaknesses (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer et al., 1993). Lauren, the first-year science teacher, seemed particularly damaged by what she perceived as unrelenting criticism. At the time of our interview, she had not yet determined whether she would continue in the profession beyond the current academic year.

Challenging the literature

Most of the foundational literature warned supervisors against assuming the role of a superior (Cogan, 1973; Glickman et al., 2005; Mosher & Purpel, 1972; Pajak, 1993. Teachers in

this study, even those with tenure, did not appear offended by supervisors who cast themselves as experts on a subject, provided they had expertise. Similarly, just as Wajnryb (1998) discovered, teachers were not fooled by supervisors who attempted to couch their criticisms as questions or suggestions. Those teachers who received direct, specific feedback seemed most empowered by their conferences and expressed the most positive relationships with their supervisors.

Expanding the literature

A number of themes arose that did not appear in the literature I reviewed. One such issue was the devaluation of feedback because of misused or overused terminology. For some teachers, familiarity had bred contempt. Additionally, some teachers and supervisors had stopped thinking about why these topics were important or represented best practice.

Another issue alluded to but not explicitly discussed in the literature (Vasquéz, 2004) was the inability of some supervisors to make themselves understandable. Alfonso et al. (1981) identified three types of communication failure. Technical failures entail inaccuracy in the transference of information and can be the result of anything from misinformation to audibility. Failure to provide understandable feedback is a technical communication problem and typically occurred when supervisors layered multiple politeness strategies on their advice.

The topic of teacher reflection was also problematic. There was an implicit assumption from the supervisors in the study that if teachers were talking they were reflecting. Eraut (2004) noted that "the term „reflection" is now in such common use . . . that there is considerable danger of it being taken for granted, rather than being treated as problematic" (p. 47). Taggart and Wilson (2005) offered the following very satisfying, if not final, definition of reflective thinking as "the process of making informed and logical decisions on educational matters, then assessing

the consequences of those decisions" (p. 1). In this study, there were numerous instances of teacher talk lacking one or the other, or both, of the two elements noted in Taggart and Wilson‟s definition. Some teachers conflated self-reflection with self-criticism. Additionally, some supervisors either did not recognize when reflection was not taking place or were reticent to redirect unreflective teachers.

The reluctance to offer specific praise was a surprising finding. Mike framed his positive observation of Molly‟s lesson design as a question, attempting to elicit from her recognition of the value of what she did. Similarly, Anita took herself to task for complimenting Lucy‟s use of proximity rather than drawing that observation out of her. Other supervisors employed "negative praise," noting the bad things that did *not* happen rather than the good things that did.

Implications and Recommendations

The issues noted in the discussion section have three primary implications for both practitioners and researchers. The first is that all feedback provided during the conference is filtered through the lens of the relationship between the teacher and the supervisor. Successful conferences are unlikely to occur between individuals who do not trust or respect each other. Second, effective supervision requires no less mindful and reflective behavior than effective teaching. Finally, supervisors must determine their roles prior to engaging teachers in conferences. For clarity, first the implications derived from the data are identified, followed by recommendations.

Implication 1: Resolving the role of the supervisor

By accepting the job of department chair, assistant principal, instructional coach, and so forth, and by agreeing to conduct evaluative observations, supervisors are *de facto* authorities.

Unfortunately, they may operate within a system that attempts to deny this fact, an effort that seems both disingenuous and futile.

Recommendations for practitioners

As they create or refine their supervision procedures, school districts must be honest about what these procedures should accomplish. The Upland Hills District uses the word "appraisal" in the title its supervision guidelines. An appraisal system is evaluative, yet supervisors at UHN are encouraged to provide teachers "ownership" of conferences. These are mutually exclusive goals and likely to make difficult the achievement of either. Districts that wish to encourage teacher ownership of conferences might consider instituting peer coaching. Teachers may be more apt to take ownership of their learning if it is guided by colleagues who do not have institutional authority over them.

Supervisors who are also evaluators may find it useful to approach their work with teachers in a fashion similar to that of effective teachers‟ work in the classroom. This will require that supervisors become more systematic in planning conferences. There was tremendous variation in the amount of preparation individual supervisors in the study gave to any given conference. Some, like Anita, had prepared an extensive list of commendations and areas of future focus. Other supervisors had not engaged in such careful planning. Considerable silences were noted in some conference audio-recordings while supervisors reviewed their field notes looking for data on which to comment or considering ways to phrase criticism. Failure to plan places supervisors in the uncomfortable and largely unproductive position of having to "wing it" when they offer critique. By preparing more thoroughly, supervisors will be better equipped to offer alternatives to teachers who struggle.

For those supervising outside of their subject matter specialty

Lynn pointed out that, with the exception of those done by her department chairs, all of her observations had been conducted by people lacking musical expertise. Although she might appreciate musical feedback, she did not expect it and was made uncomfortable by supervisors who felt the need to apologize for not knowing more than they did. She expressed a desire for those people simply to comment on the areas in which they were qualified. Allegra, whose job as Technology & Applied Arts chairperson required that she supervise classes as varied as Foods and Architectural Drawing commented, "I've basically tried to look for those things that I think will help kids learn . . . no matter what subject it is." Even Colleen, whose own conference behavior belied her faith in these words, remarked that, whatever your teaching background, "you can still sense when kids are learning."

These participants' comments are useful advice for all supervisors, but especially those who are observing outside their subject matter specialties. Their job is not to evaluate the lesson but the lesson's effect on the students. Supervisors should focus on the students. Do they appear interested in the material? Do they appear to understand the material? Are all students participating? What is preventing some students from participating? Supplied with such observations, the supervisor can then address the teacher's instruction from the students' perspective. Even issues of content can be framed around how students reacted to it, for example, "When you brought up the topic of ____, I noticed several clusters of students flipping through their books looking for a definition." Whether the word in the blank is "mitosis," "flying buttress," or "onomatopoeia" matters less than whether the teacher noticed the students' confusion and has a plan to lessen this confusion in the future.

For encouraging reflection and active processing

As a means of drawing the conference to an end, most supervisors asked a variation on "Do you have any questions?" a practice they urged teachers to eschew with their own students. At least two of the teachers who responded "no" later expressed confusion or disagreement with supervisor speech, lending support to the assertion that this questioning technique when used in a conference has weaknesses similar to those revealed when used in the classroom. None of the supervisors explicitly checked for understanding, although some teachers demonstrated their understanding unbidden.

Supervisors might frame checks for understanding as a continuation of teacher reflection. Rather than restricting teacher commentary to the beginning of the conference, supervisors who made suggestions could then ask, "Why don't we discuss how you could put this into practice next week?" This tack would allow teachers the opportunity to process orally the information they received. It would further enable supervisors to evaluate whether their message was received in the manner intended. Ideally, teachers would leave the conference with a plan for the immediate future as well as a deeper understanding of how general ideas work in specific instances or specific ideas can be generalized across cases.

Teachers who are not engaging in meaningful reflective speech would benefit from supervisors who used follow-up questions and prompts to guide them toward greater understanding of their practice. For example, Moira attempted to pull Al out of a pedagogically unproductive line of thought by asking, "What would it take for you . . . to not be so driven by . . . the exam?" Although this question interrupted Al's speech, it allowed him to maintain the speaking floor and it refocused Al's attention on issues of instruction that were within his control.

For making the workload manageable for teachers

While some teachers were hindered by the absence of suggestions, others were overwhelmed by what they perceived as too many suggestions and no indication of how to prioritize them. Supervisors should reconsider who benefits from listing every point on which teachers might improve. As a former writing instructor, I found that my students learned more once I stopped commenting on everything they could do better. I eliminated margin notes and limited my written comments to a short narrative at the end of the paper. Students found this approach less emotionally hurtful and more intellectually manageable than my previous approach.

The "20 bullet points" in Al"s areas of future focus is the equivalent of a term paper hemorrhaging red ink. The amount and type of suggestions supervisors offer should be dictated by the teacher"s developmental stage. Just like students, teachers have zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Helpful instruction stretches the recipients so they grow professionally. Instruction that attempts to stretch teachers beyond a realistic point may result in feelings of frustration and lowered self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Recommendations for research

Postobservation conferences during which multiple deficits were identified appeared to have been preceded by preobservation conferences that did not require teachers to "rehearse" their planned lesson or require supervisors to make clear their observation criteria (Cogan, 1973; Glatthorn, 1997; Zepeda, 2007). Preobservation conferences were outside the scope of the current study, but future scholarship should examine the entire continuum of the clinical cycle, pursuing answers to such questions as the following:

- How does the preobservation conference affect the observed lesson and the postobservation conference?

- What do teachers and supervisors discuss during preobservation conferences?
- What agreements are made during these conferences?
- Are these agreements upheld during observations and postobservation conferences?
- What changes to their lesson plans do teachers make following preobservation conferences?

Future research might also examine the coping strategies of supervisors who feel under-qualified. Researchers might further examine the attitudes of teachers toward supervisors with teaching backgrounds other than their own. Supervisors from traditionally marginalized subject areas like physical education (Barney & Deutsch, 2009) and music (Benedict, 2007) may be particularly vulnerable either to feelings of self-doubt or to the perception by others that they lack sufficient academic pedigree.

Three of the four supervisors of what were deemed successful conferences had served as administrators in excess of 10 years, some closer to 20. More experienced supervisors could reasonably be expected to have resolved much of the role conflict they suffered earlier in their careers. I recommend further study of supervisors‟ career development and identify formation. Among the questions that might be visited are these:

- How do supervisors with different amounts of experiences describe their roles?
- How do these same supervisors enact their roles?
- How do their stated descriptions align, or fail to align, with their enactment?

Finally, supervision scholars may wish to pursue the development of an evaluation model specific to those who supervise classroom teachers. Evaluation of teachers at UHN was largely guided by Danielson‟s (2007) *Framework for Teaching*. No such framework appeared to be in use for evaluating supervisors. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1988) provided a set of standards for evaluating assessment systems divided into the four general categories of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy. This document, however, is book-length and intended to cover every situation in which evaluation might be needed, limiting

its efficacy as a heuristic device. What may be needed is a more user-friendly reference guide, a *Framework for Supervision*, if you will.

Because this study's scope did not address the full continuum of the clinical supervision cycle, I am unprepared to offer such a document. Table 5.1 is a modest beginning, modeled on Danielson's (2007) framework which appears in Chapter 3. The fourth of Danielson's domains, Professionalism, has been eliminated as it covers behaviors not specific to the postobservation conference.

I have moved "flexibility and responsiveness" from Domain III to Domain II. I make this distinction even though Danielson (2010) herself acknowledged that these divisions are somewhat arbitrary and serve only to enhance the instrument's use as an analytic tool. Supervisors' willingness to consider approaches to instruction different from their own, provided they represent sound practice, demonstrates respect for teachers as professionals and, therefore, seems more appropriately considered within the context of the conference environment.

Table 5.1
A framework for postobservation conferences: Components of successful interactions

Domain I: Planning & Preparation	Domain II: The Conference Environment	Domain III: Instruction
• Knowledge of teacher's developmental stage • Knowledge of adult pedagogy • Clearly defined conference goals grounded in observed teacher behavior • Coherent guidance	• An environment of respect and rapport • A culture for professional learning and collaboration • Reflective listening • Flexibility and responsiveness	• Engaging teachers in discussion and reflection • Using questioning and discussion techniques • Knowledge of "best practice" teaching methodologies • Assessment of teacher understanding

I have added "reflective listening" to Domain II. I did not use the more common term "active listening" partly because that term's ubiquity has led to it being used imprecisely or without thought. People who merely remain silent while others talk may think they are engaging

in active listening. Active listening entails restating what a speaker has said in an attempt to demonstrate that the listener has not misinterpreted or misunderstood the speech. Reflective listening goes beyond this behavior and requires the following behaviors from supervisors:

1) hear what the teacher says;
2) provide demonstrable evidence that the teacher has been heard accurately;
3) determine if the teacher‟s commentary is consistent with or contrary to the supervisor‟s observations;
4) use prompts and follow-up questions to promote further clarification of teacher‟s ideas; or,
5) surrender the supervisor‟s pre-existing beliefs; or,
6) disagree, providing observation- and/or research-based documentation

The last item is likely to provoke some dispute, so I address it in greater detail below.

As Hayashi (1996) also found, supervisors in this study who disagreed with teachers‟ assertions often issued a series of questions to guide teachers toward the "right" answer. While supervisors may believe they are providing a more educative experience by eliciting a response, teachers can find this process unhelpful and, in some cases, destructive (Cogan, 1973). While there is no evidence in this study that teachers were negatively affected by the use of leading questions, there is evidence that teachers benefited from explicit direction by supervisors.

Implication #2: Establishing a culture of respect and trust

Spencer-Oatey (2000) distinguished between the content and relationship factors of all communication. Content factors comprise what is said while relationship factors entail how it is said and how the speech is interpreted by the hearer. Spencer-Oatey warned that even speech that is technically accurate may fail to have the desired effect if it conveys a "lack of respect for the other person," is "interpreted as a bid for one-upmanship," or "lead[s] to feelings of resentment and dislike" (p. 2).

Interpersonal conflicts

The accuracy of Spencer-Oatey‟s (2000) assertions was apparent in Holly‟s dismissal of Allegra‟s feedback. Allegra and Holly‟s conflict had made its way to the principal‟s office where dyadic discussions between Anita and Holly and Anita and Allegra had taken place. There was no indication that Anita, Allegra, and Holly had ever met as a group and attempted to settle the difficulty, and there was ample evidence that the tensions remained that had necessitated Anita‟s intervention.

Scholars have written on how the micropolitical machinery of schools affects relationships among individuals within buildings as well as between schools and their communities (Achinstein, 2002; Malen, 1994). Some work has also been done on the socio-emotional ramifications for teachers of spending large portions of time with children (Metz, 1993). When this issue arose in my data, I discovered only two sources that offered "solutions" to these problems. One was a message board on which the majority of respondents suggested making the conflict an issue for union or administrative mediation, and one who remarked, "Generally, teacher-to-teacher conflicts in my district are dealt with through dismissal or transfer" (Teacher's Corner, 2006). McEwan‟s (2005) book placed on the back of the principal the responsibility of "dealing with" angry teachers. The absence of literature that examines how teachers can resolve conflicts among themselves suggests an absence of sustained effort by scholars or practitioners to study and remedy the problem of interpersonal conflict in schools.

Recommendations for practitioners. Supervisors who are made aware of interpersonal conflicts between adults in their buildings may wish to evaluate whether the conflict is one that requires or would benefit from their input. Continually enabling adults in P-12 environments to avoid uncomfortable adult-to-adult interactions discourages teachers from transcending puerile

behavior. A more appropriate tack may be to explain to complainants that this is an issue they must take up with the subject of the dispute. If an administrator‟s input is required, the conflict resolution process should be transparent and involve both parties simultaneously. *Ex-parte* discussions between one disputant and the administrator will resolve little as the two individuals who have co-created the problem never confront each other. A potentially fractious discussion between two people and mediated by a designated administrator may be temporarily uncomfortable or unpleasant but will likely yield greater benefits over time by clearing the air rather than spraying air freshener.

When a conflict develops between a teacher and his or her immediate supervisor, it is critical that the problem be resolved, not merely contained. Professional growth requires honest, sometimes difficult conversations that cannot take place in the absence of trust. If the teacher and supervisor are unable to resolve their dispute, the clinical observation cycle should not be conducted by that supervisor alone. Brenda Margolis, the English Department chairperson, called the written evaluation of a teacher "a formal manifestation" of what the teacher and supervisor do informally on a daily basis. A conference is only as effective as the "relationship the chair has with the teacher throughout the year."

Recommendations for researchers. Researchers should examine in greater depth the interpersonal tensions among teachers and their supervisors. As schools are held ever more accountable for achieving measurable results, supervisors are likely to find themselves tasked with more and more uncomfortable conversations with individual teachers whose students fail to demonstrate that they are benefiting from the teacher‟s instruction. Ethnographies and case studies of schools that have instituted high stakes appraisal systems might yield valuable insight

into how successful supervisors negotiate the task of providing feedback that is both critical and constructive.

Lack of familiarity with teacher practice

In an era of shrinking budgets and burgeoning responsibilities, it does not seem realistic to suggest that supervisors conduct more observations. If they are to serve as instructional leaders, however, supervisors must familiarize themselves with the day-to-day instructional practices of those they lead. Such efforts need not be extraordinary but may require some creativity on the supervisor"s part. As this study was conducted in a large, comprehensive public high school with a strong teacher"s union, the recommendations provided are offered with this context in mind. Practitioners in different contexts may find other approaches more useful.

Recommendations for practitioners. Supervisors assigned to evaluate many teachers each semester might review a single sample of student work from a single teacher each day. In this way, supervisors can maintain awareness of what topics teachers are addressing, how they are grading, and how students are responding without becoming overwhelmed by additional work. A formal write-up about the artifact is neither necessary nor desirable. Rather, supervisors might use a digital audio-recorder to make brief notes, not for official purposes but as an aid to memory. Audio files could then be uploaded to a computer for future reference.

Supervisors might schedule a 10-minute walk down a different hallway each day, perhaps at a different time each day. As a teacher and, later, an observer in schools, I found that a remarkable amount of information about classroom environments and teaching styles could be gathered in this fashion. The intent is not to create paranoia among the faculty that "big brother" is watching but rather to increase supervisors" familiarity with teachers" classroom practices. For this reason, I recommend that supervisors not bring recording devices with them on these walks

but wait until returning to their offices before making any notes. While supervisors will probably not be able to draw any conclusions about content from these walking tours, they will be able to see teacher and student behaviors. Over time, patterns of behavior will probably emerge that supervisors can use to flesh out their understanding of observed lessons.

Productive critique

While it is essential that supervisors confront destructive or ineffective teaching behaviors (Cogan, 1973), it is also necessary to offer critique in such a way that it does not destroy the teacher‟s confidence or desire to improve. One of the problems I identified in the current study, and that Fisch (1995) found in hers, was that negative feedback was very specific while positive feedback tended to be vague.

As noted in Chapter 4, Hal cited multiple, concrete examples of things Lauren did poorly or did not do at all. His positive comments to her, on the other hand, were less specific, for example, "You do have a nice presence with the students. You‟re not intimidating." Anita, by contrast, was as specific in her praise as she was in her criticism. She told Lucy, "You provided proximity to all students. The second day I think you were a little better about getting really across the room." In their study of workplace motivation, Hackman and Lawler (1971) determined that one of the necessary components of job satisfaction and motivation was the receipt of believable feedback. Perfunctory positive feedback seems insincere and, as a result, does not have a buoying effect commensurate to specific, descriptive negative feedback. Many supervisors in the current study were reticent to offer praise, even when they had specific observations on which to make favorable comments.

Recommendations for practitioners. Supervisors should give themselves permission to offer praise. This should not be done as a rapid-fire list of things teacher did well, nor should

supervisors offer empty or insincere compliments. Positive feedback should be accorded the same consideration as critical feedback, with teachers and supervisors discussing why the behavior is worthy of commendation given the effect it appears to have on the students.

Recommendations for when praise is not an option. It may be that the supervisor found little praiseworthy in the observed lesson. Mike described an observation he had conducted several years previously where "the kids were doing everything but standing on their heads in the corners." In such cases, supervisors with the requisite authority can give teachers a "do-over." This is how Mike dealt with the disastrous lesson noted above. He gave the teacher approximately two weeks to "get things under control" and then rescheduled the official observation. Mike described the results as "much better—wasn't completely fixed yet, but much better, and as the year progressed [it] got better and better." The validity of the observation and postobservation conference was not compromised by providing the teacher with a second chance, Mike was still able to provide constructive feedback, and the teacher continued to grow as a professional. Had Mike insisted on retaining the first observation, the teacher might have been released following her first year.

Instances of such poor classroom practice may be rare in schools that take supervision seriously. More typical would be lessons in which the supervisor identifies several significant deficits in the teacher's practice. For every deficit that the supervisor brings to the teacher's attention, he or she must also provide clear direction for how the teacher might remedy the problem. Anita offered several exemplary models of this process, some of which are noted in Chapter 4.

As part of their conference planning, supervisors should consider what alternative teaching behaviors and techniques they can recommend. They should also listen to what

remedies teachers have tried previously and the pitfalls they may have encountered. They should then collaborate with teachers on new approaches to the problem. Supervisors who are unprepared to help teachers find solutions should reconsider whether their identification of problems is actually helpful.

Implication #3: Using terminology and ideas mindfully

In part because they were components of the school‟s improvement plan, questioning strategies, checking for understanding, cooperative learning as an enhancement to student engagement levels, and using closure activities surfaced in nearly every conference. Because they trusted the principal‟s judgment, the other supervisors were champions of her ideas, but not all demonstrated that they understood the rationales behind them or how they could be implemented most effectively. Several department chairs had not yet taken the professional development courses that were the source of some of the buzz words. I was mildly alarmed to hear supervisors advocate "more group work" to teachers who were neither trained in nor comfortable with the use of cooperative groups. Supervisors cited the need to increase levels of student engagement, but, because of the reduced individual accountability, loosely organized group tasks can be less instructionally sound than individual work (Dotson, 2001).

Teacher "ownership"

Another frequently employed expression the meaning of which study participants might wish to problematize is that of teacher "ownership" of the conferences. Only one teacher spoke more than his supervisor. Some supervisors spoke more than twice as much as the teachers with whom they conferred. Supervisors began and ended the conferences, and almost all teacher talk was in response to a supervisor behavior. These finding suggest that teachers did not "own" their conferences.

What is noteworthy is that the amount of teacher "ownership" appeared to matter little when evaluating the efficacy of the conference. Molly and Lucy, whose speech made up 27% and 29% of their respective conferences, expressed positive feelings about their relationships with their supervisors and their intent to put into practice the advice they received. Meanwhile, Holly and Al, whose speech approached parity with that of their supervisors, expressed highly negative feelings about their conferences.

Recommendations for practitioners

When upper-level administrators adopt a school improvement initiative, they must make sure that their middle managers understand its value and how it should be practiced. Supervisors who cite hot-button issues when critiquing teachers should continue their line of thought into why these issues are problematic or what effect their use—or lack of use—had on the students in the observed classroom. Likewise, supervisors should prompt teachers who cite these issues during self-evaluation to deepen their reflections by examining how these issues affected the students in the observed lesson, how the teachers might have avoided the problem during that lesson, what they might do differently in the future, and what effect any changes could be expected to have on student learning.

Recommendations for research

These findings provide a springboard for quantitative or mixed method studies that examine the correlation between ratios of teacher and supervisor speech and perceived or "actual" conference effectiveness. The question of what constitutes "ownership" might also be pursued through phenomenological inquiry.

Concluding Thoughts

I began this document with a nod to policymakers, noting the inconsistent teacher evaluation practices within and between states. My failure to address myself to the policy implications of this study may seem a careless omission or laziness.

It is neither.

Once education reform becomes politicized, it falls victim to the vagaries of politics. The 1973 Supreme Court ruling in *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* cemented the principle that the responsibility for the care and maintenance of public schools lay with the states, not the federal government (Rossow & Stefkovich, 2005; Tye, 2000). In theory, local control should allow school districts to be more responsive to the needs and interests of their constituents. In practice, it leaves them captive to the language of education policy, intentionally vague to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of each state and each district within each state (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 71).

Furthermore, what I cannot say with any certainty that I have a recommendation to make, even a vague one. As homogenous as my sample was, the results were still mixed. Should more states require postobservation conferences? I am not yet convinced that they are accomplishing enough to warrant the time and money such a mandate would impose on school districts. Should districts abolish postobservation conferences? I am not ready to concede that either. Policy decisions are made too far away from the people who must enforce them.

The longer I remain in education, the more convinced I become that the only meaningful policies are the ones that take place at an individual level. Elmore (2004) may emphasize "scaling up," but I find Bill Ayers'‟s philosophy more credible. He explained that good teaching is the result of constantly asking, "Given *everything* I know right now, how can I best teach *this*

child?" (personal communication, July 1, 2009)[20]. I cannot, in good conscience, make blanket recommendations for teachers and administrators I do not know. I will, however, address some remarks to that supervisor who finds him or herself in the position of conducting a postobservation conference.

One of the first administrators I ever worked for had a gift for giving feedback. She could point out everything I did wrong during the observed lesson but do it in such a way that, rather than climbing out on a window ledge, I felt renewed and motivated to improve. Some people write symphonies; she conducted postobservation conferences. I urge those who would have a similar effect on the teachers under their supervision to consider doing the following:

Prepare. Make a plan for the conference that takes into consideration the teacher‟s developmental stage. Include specific areas of commendation you wish to bring to the teacher‟s attention. Be able to follow every criticism with a remedy.

Listen. Be willing to surrender your own preconceptions if a teacher‟s ideas are contrary to your own but represent sound pedagogy. Know the difference between listening and waiting your turn.

Speak. Do not make teachers guess what you want. Say what you need to say in the plainest language possible. Know your material so you can talk about it concisely, coherently, and accurately.

Trust yourself. Even if you have less experience than those under your supervision, your vantage point during the observed lesson provides you with knowledge and insight they do not have. Believe that you have something useful to offer.

[20] Dr. Ayers wrote this in an article or book chapter that I read many years ago. I e-mailed him and asked for the name of the source, to which he replied, "Thanks for remembering that. I haven't a clue where it is, though I remember repeating it often myself. If you'd like I'll say it again now....There, you can cite as personal correspondence! Best wishes, Bill."

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Subjectivities Statement

My incarnation as a teacher began in 1992 while I was waiting to be called into an audition for an Empire Carpet commercial. I suddenly realized I hated the business side of acting and wanted some other life. I considered what career might suit my personality. I liked imposing order on chaos. I am a bit of neatnik and take great pleasure in making lists and then crossing off entries (so much so that I often put things I"d already done on the list). I love knowing stuff. I am the Jew you invited to your caroling party because I know all the words. I can tell you where the terms "uppercase" and "lowercase" originated and that a martini with an olive was called a Gibson. My dream is to appear on *Jeopardy!*. So, I am a know-it-all control freak who enjoys performing and telling people what to do. In retrospect, teaching seemed like such an obvious choice. I enrolled at the University of Illinois at Chicago in January of 1993, took a deep breath, put my head down, and didn"t pick it up until I"d completed a Master"s of Education two years later.

I had an image in my head of the sort of teacher I was going to be. She was an amalgam of every protagonist from every teacher book or movie I"d ever seen: *Dead Poets Society*, *Stand & Deliver*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *To Sir With Love*, *The Corn is Green*, *The Water is Wide* . . . More than a decade later, details from those books that

shaped my image of good teaching cling to me. Of particular impact was a small volume called *The First Year of Teaching: Real World Stories from America's Teachers*.

In one vignette entitled "Don"t Waste Your Time with Those Kids," a newbie is assigned to a class of self-described "retards" and can"t seem to corral them. On Day #2, the Rookie reveals to the students her own struggle with dyslexia and forbids them to label themselves stupid. They *immediately* improve. They even coax her into drilling them in grammar because "people still think [they"re] stupid because [they] don"t talk right" (p. 29). The students know she is getting married over the summer, but they are poor and can"t afford to buy her flowers. They take the initiative to solicit donations from floral shops and funeral parlors, literally *filling* her room with flowers. The student who spearheaded the operation tells her, "Period 2 got you roses, and Period 3 got you a corsage, but we love you more" (p. 30). She bursts into tears. All her students graduate, six earn college scholarships, and everyone lives happily ever after.

That was the sort of first year I expected.

My actual first few years were a bit less romantic. A typical day had me up at 5:00 a.m. and out the door by 6:15. The hours between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. were a blur of teaching, grading, planning, meeting, making and returning phone calls, sending and receiving e-mails, working with students one-on-one, performing my extra-curricular obligations, and putting out miscellaneous brush fires on an *ad hoc* basis. When it was all over, I would climb into my car and try to stay awake for the entire ride home. I had no social life. I was always at school, in transit to or from school, preparing for school, or recovering from school. The closest I came to recreation was going to the gym, and even that felt like an obligation. Sleep took on a near-erotic appeal. I grabbed naps wherever I could. I slept on my desk; I slept *under* my desk; I slept at red lights.

Weekends offered no real respite. Saturdays were taken up with housekeeping chores that, although tedious, were at least non-intellectual and finite. Sundays began with lesson

planning. I‟d pull up a blank Word document, create a file: C:/MyDocuments/English III/Huck Finn/LessonPlans/Feb 28 to Mar 4. Then, over the next 3 hours or so, a document like the one below took shape.

2/28-3/4

Monday
1. Grammar Quiz—collect Friday‟s homework
2. Warm up (rub stomach/pat head)
3. Hypothetical situation: What would Thoreau think?
    a. Bombing and abortion clinic to prevent the death of unborn children?
    b. Trespassing on private property to prevent a 1000 r. old tree from being cut down?
4. HW: Read Ch. 31. Write Huck a letter from HDT. Possible topics to address:
    a. What advice would he give?
    b. Is Huck going to Hell?
    c. Should he steal Jim?
    d. How is he different from other sinners and liars?

Tuesday
1. Sustained silent reading (SSR)
2. Mix-pair-discuss: If you found an envelope with $$ and an address on it, would you return it? If you overheard people planning an armed robbery, would you go to the police? Share homework letters, discuss Huck‟s dilemma.
3. HW: Ch. 32-33—flag passages that indicate Huck has great empathy for other people. How does Twain feel about the conscience?

Wednesday
1. Quiz: Who do the Phelps think Huck is? What happens to the Duke and Dauphin? How does Huck feel about what happens in Question #2? What does his reaction tell you about Huck?
2. Discuss answers to quiz
3. Warm-up (blow feathers)
4. Anticipate: How does Huck see himself in comparison to Tom? What is Tom‟s idea of adventure? What is Huck‟s idea of adventure? Knowing all this, who will be in charge of stealing Jim and how successful with the plan be?
5. HW: Ch. 34-35—flag passages where someone needs to slap some sense into Tom Sawyer. Why does Twain allow Tom to take over? What are we supposed to discover about Huck?

Thursday
1. SSR
2. Inside-outside circle: discuss flagged passages
3. HW: Ch. 36-38—flag comic passages.

Friday: NO SCHOOL, GOOD FRIDAY

This process required constant movement between the novel, the pedagogy, my imagination, and, over time, a deep understanding of what made my students tick. With three preps, it was not unusual to remain at the computer from 10 in the morning until 5 or 6 in the evening. Having completed the lesson plans, I might have a stack of papers yet to grade. On Sunday

nights, I"d climb into bed, relieved and proud that I"d gotten everything done. What a good girl, am I: the papers are graded, the lessons are planned, God is in his heaven, and all"s right with the world.

Even then, I think I realized how dependent I was on the job to give my life meaning. I just didn"t consider that a bad thing. I was grateful to have something about which to feel passionate. In those early days, even at 5:00 a.m., I awoke every morning excited to go into work and try something. I had fascinating arguments with myself on the drive in:

> *We're coming up on the research unit—if I have to read 50 research papers I'll open a vein, swear to God! There's gotta be a way to make research interesting. I mean, some people actually do it for a living. That'd be kind of fun, like to work for* Jeopardy! *and just look shit up for a living. Hmm--what if they did that—made* Jeopardy! *games for their topics? Fifty* Jeopardy! *games? That's not much better than 50 papers. 'I'll take "Soul-Crushing Boredom" for $2000, Alex.' Of course, they wouldn't have to do* Jeopardy! *They could model their game on* Life *or* Monopoly *or, ooh!, what about those role playing games or Choose Your Own Adventure? Okay, now we're getting somewhere. And then I can teach technical writing and have them include an instruction manual. Oh, hell, Jeremy wants to learn about serial killers—what the *$@! kind of board game is he gonna come up with—save the nursing student before Richard Speck finds her? That's pretty clever—and completely horrible. Don't even joke about that with him; he'll totally take you seriously. That'd be a fun parent phone call. He could do a* CSI *meets* Clue *kind of thing, and players could learn different guys' M.O.s and symptoms and common background elements by reading the playing cards. Oh,*

for crying out loud, Deb, let the boy make up his own game! I can work a computer skills thing in if they have to design a cover for the box. I'll have to book the computer lab so everyone can use desktop publishing software for that. Okay, so how long will this take? I gotta teach them MLA format, then a week in the library, three days in the lab, a day or two to put everything together, a day or two to present. What's that—about three weeks? I wonder if the Assistant Principal wants to see this. I'll send her an invite and let her decide. So I need to write up a schedule and a rubric, book the library—wait! I should let the librarian know what the topics are in advance so she can pull stuff—book the computer lab. I'll let the AP know what's happening once we've got a little more momentum. Oh, this'll be fun. Now, what about senior comp? . . .

My classrooms were laboratories where we just tried things.

"Ms. T, this book has no ending."

"What do you mean?"

"The bad guy—nothing happens to him. For $6.00 you expect a book to have an ending!"

"Alright. Take it easy. How „bout this? Instead of the assignment the other groups are working on, why don‟t you write an ending and send it to Cynthia Voigt?"

Students invited me to their basketball games and wrestling matches. Parents called to thank me for caring about their children, for making English class enjoyable for the first time. By becoming a teacher, I had the opportunity to rewrite not just my high school experience but my entire social self. I was finally popular.

My relationships with my superiors, however, were less successful. I didn‟t "get" how the gamesmanship of the workplace operated. As an untenured teacher, I was formally evaluated twice a semester. I foolishly requested my department chair observe the worst class I had: my afternoon freshmen. Something about the chemistry in that group was off, and I spent most of my time screaming at them. I wanted Kim‟s input.

Twenty minutes into the observation, two girls squared off and were about to start throwing punches at each other. I grabbed one and asked Kim to take the other to the Dean‟s office. While the write-up of that class was more positive than it might have been, not surprisingly, my management skills were cited as needing improvement. Although my likewise untenured colleagues were surely suffering similar pangs with their students, unlike them, I had voluntarily exposed this weakness. I didn‟t understand that my job was to obscure those weaknesses as best I could and present an image of competence, whether I had it or not.

In my freshmen class, the board game project came to fruition, and I invited Kim to observe it in action. For one class period, students "played," allowing all of us to evaluate how effectively the instructions were written and whether the game did what it purported to do: entertain *and* instruct. Some time subsequent, Kim commented that the game day was too unstructured, that "we like cleverness and new ideas, but we also need to accomplish real learning outcomes." Given the assumption that I was a screw-up, my efforts at implementing student centered methodologies came off not as innovative and cutting edge but chaotic and disorganized.

As time went on, I became resentful of how disinclined some of my superiors seemed to acknowledge the good things I was making happen. I helped my class of non-college-bound seniors put together a presentation to which they invited the entire administrative team, including

all the department chairs. Although several accepted the invitation, my own did not. I arranged to have my juniors go to a nearby elementary school to read books they had written, and the only comment I received was an e-mail chiding me for not wearing more professional attire on the trip.

Prior to these experiences, I had assumed that the uneasy relationship I had with my superiors was largely my fault. I didn‟t always project the most professional image. I was loud and occasionally crude. But I was doing exactly what the administration said they wanted: engaging the students, creating authentic assessments, and providing a venue for "publishing" the work—and they still seemed disappointed with me. I vented to my friend and colleague, Donna, who told me, "If you‟re waiting for somebody in the main office to tell you what a great job you‟re doing, it ain‟t gonna happen. You need to figure out how to get that on your own." Fine! I would. As I was not sufficiently appreciated at that school, I put myself on the job market and made no secret about it to anyone. After several interviews, I did not get hired anywhere else, making me wish I had been more circumspect.

I would be remiss if I didn‟t include a discussion about the one administrator in the building by whom I felt completely supported. The Assistant Principal for Instruction, who later became the Principal, was and remains one of my favorite people on the planet. This woman knew how to offer feedback that was neither sugar-coated nor cruel. I left every one of her postobservation conferences feeling both encouraged and mindful of improvements I needed to make. Sometime in the spring of my first year, Anita casually suggested I might enjoy taking a class over the summer with the Illinois Writing Project. In retrospect, it was probably a much more calculated move on her part than it seemed at the time. Anita saw something in me, and she nurtured it. She found the money to send me to the Model Schools Conference one summer

and a Vo-Tech conference one spring. She read drafts of my writing—both professional and creative—and offered feedback. My evolution as a teacher, a researcher, and a writer is due largely to Anita‟s mentorship, although I have joked with her that I could understand if she weren‟t all that eager to take credit for me.

I should also mention that, over time, my department chair and I forged a friendship built on affection and mutual respect. My first year teaching was Kim‟s first year as DC. For twenty years or so previously, she had been an English teacher and academic. Kim would have been a perfect fit on the faculty of a small liberal arts school in upstate New York. For years, she wore her salt-and-pepper hair in a long ponytail, only cutting it when she entered administration. She was a paradox—a uneasy combination of academic elititism and social-justice-seeking leftiness, a woman who would rather walk on her own lips than use the word "ain‟t" but who felt duty-bound to respect her students‟ use of black English vernacular. It could not have been easy being Kim. As she grew more confident in the role of DC, she got better at it. She relaxed. She stopped trying to mold us into her image and, instead, started to recognize and leverage our different strengths. Eventually, she came to trust me and value my input, and I likewise. But it took many years for this to happen.

They say it takes five years to make a teacher. Facing my fifth year in the profession, under an immediate supervisor I felt didn‟t respect me, with a teaching load that was difficult but not intellectually stimulating, I understood why so many left the profession before they had completed that probationary period. The job had not stopped being difficult, but it *had* stopped being interesting. I was simultaneously tired and bored. I thought of Thoreau‟s observation that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." I didn‟t want to sleepwalk through my career. I had to figure out a way to reinvigorate myself within the job.

Almost every summer, I took some type of professional development course. Certainly, this was motivated in part by my desire to move up on the salary schedule, but I also wanted to be the most excellent teacher God ever put on this earth. If, after calculating grades, I saw that 40% of the class had a D or F, I took a hard look at what I was doing and how that might be contributing to this grade distribution. I was the one with the two college diplomas. If they weren"t learning, I must not be teaching very well.

I was not the only individual at this school committed to professional growth and student achievement. I count myself quite fortunate to have worked with some incredibly dynamic, innovative teachers. Alice and Katie built a writing center, staffed by English faculty, that offered tutoring to students as well as consulting services to teachers of other subjects who wished to institute writing projects. Amy and Jayna designed a multidisciplinary course called Forensic Science & Law and were invited to present at an annual meeting of the American Bar Association. Sharon and Nicole created Fitness & Nutrition, another interdisciplinary offering (PE and Family & Consumer Sciences), to teach appropriate exercise, cooking, and eating habits.

At the other end of the continuum, however, were "The Bottom Feeders." These were teachers who I suspected had gone into the profession because they thought it would be easy. One of the worst offenders taught in the English department. And by "taught" I mean he pressed the play button on the VCR and then disappeared behind a newspaper. Four years after leaving that school, whenever I read an article about a proposed school reform, my mind immediately jumps to an image of how these individuals would respond, and I cringe.

I think of Tom, a PE teacher, who, through a combination of longevity, coaching contracts, and continuing education credits, made in excess of $100,000 per year. He lived in the affluent suburb adjacent to the one in which the school was located and bragged to his neighbors,

whose taxes paid his salary, about how little he did. It didn"t help that he was also wont to tell sexist or racist jokes and denigrate the efforts of teachers like me who actually worked for a living. I hated him. Beyond the fact that he represented everything that was wrong with unions and tenure—two things I wholeheartedly support, in theory—he made it so difficult to defend ourselves to outsiders who already thought that teachers were overpaid babysitters.

Tom was an extreme example of the bottom feeder genus. There were others, though.

- The driver"s education teacher who once told me that "the only difference between us and the kids is a few years and a few thousand dollars." He was later arrested for criminal sexual abuse of a 17-year student to whom he was providing "tutoring."
- The PE/health teacher who actually uttered these words in a meeting: "Unless we"re doing this like we"re always done it, I"m leaving!"
- The biology teacher who was heard to say, "Good riddance," when told of the murder of Matthew Shepard, the Wyoming college student who was tortured and then killed because he was gay.

Less egregious was the physics teacher who referred to my department as "the English pukes," and who talked directly into my breasts every time I was forced to interact with him or the history teacher who seemed pathologically obstructionist. He would meet any effort to do things differently with a passive aggression that boggled the mind.

As a hermeneuticist, I have tried to understand these men—most of the bottom feeders were men—to make sense of their behavior from their perspectives. When I was student teaching, I was told that quite a few men born in the early baby boom era became teachers to get what was called an "occupational deferment" from Viet Nam. I could accept that if not for the fact that the war in Viet Nam has been over for 35 years. Of course, I realize that not everyone

approaches their lives with the same fearlessness (recklessness?) that I do. Once ensconced in a teaching post, possibly with a growing family, the idea of changing careers may not have seemed like an option.

Another explanation may be the fatigue and disappointment that sets in quite early in a teaching career. Even the most committed professional gets tired and angry. Women nurture each other through these feelings; they burst into tears, talk, and then hug. I cannot imagine any of these men allowing himself to be vulnerable to his peers. Their survival technique may have been to turn their disappointments outward. It is far easier to blame the kids, the administration, the parents, or the government for one‟s failures than to cast that critical eye inward. In addition, given the stereotypically macho demeanors of most of these guys, they must have feared that their friends and neighbors judged them less than manly for having chosen a female-dominated profession. Their posturing may have been a form of preening.

My criticism grows out of the love and respect I have for teachers. Their jobs are so difficult and the rewards so unreliable. But because the job is so important, I have tremendous expectations of them. I expect them to be smart—very smart, in fact. I expect them to be charismatic presenters. I expect them to be intellectually curious, to desire knowledge for its own sake. I expect them to be professionally committed. I expect them to enjoy their students. When confronted with a teacher who does not match these expectations, I grow angry.

Most of my peers, like most people in any profession, were neither bottom feeders nor superstars. They were hard-working, well-intentioned, and occasionally successful. They were also so overworked and under-supported that deficits in their teaching went largely unrecognized. Everyone had bad days, and some had more than others, but few had time to make the connection between inputs and outcomes. As solo practitioners, we experienced our

failures in relative privacy and complained about them afterwards, but the pressure not to intervene unless specifically asked to do so was greater than the desire to offer professional advice. My job as a peer was simply to agree: "Yes, the kids should do their homework." "Yes, the parents should be more outraged at their children than at you." "Yes, it's incredibly stupid that the ISBE is forcing us to administer the ACT to non-college-bound students." I bought ear plugs so that I could work in the English office without having to listen to the constant laments. It's not that I didn't do my share of complaining. I just figured that, faced with an unstoppable force like NCLB or student apathy, I needed to adapt. I could complain, but that wasn't going to fix my problem.

Eventually, I decided to leave teaching. I still loved the interactions with students, but I had lost the spark that enabled me to get up at 5:00 a.m. with a smile on my face. I looked into the future and realized that, unless I was willing to become an administrator, I would continue to do the same job for the next twenty or thirty years. I was too natively restless to find that an acceptable option. I decided to get a Ph.D., so I could join the faculty of a teacher preparation program and mold teachers in my image. (And, for the record, I *do* recognize the hypocrisy and irony of that comment, given how my relationship with Kim began.)

At the time I did not know what a doctoral degree was; I only knew I needed one. Not surprisingly, my transition to the academy has not been an uneasy one. While I was a teacher, I felt contemptuous of colleagues who dismissed new ideas with some variation of we've-never-done-it-this-way-before. I didn't swallow whole everything that emerged from academia, but I was willing to listen. If what I was currently doing wasn't working, it was worth a shot to try something else. Now privy to the discussions that yield these "new" ideas, I hear academics voice contempt for practitioners, forcing me into the position of defending teacher behavior—

even behavior that I abjured when I *was* a teacher—sometimes for no better reason than "nobody is allowed to beat up my kid brother except me."

Most of the researchers I have met had very short teaching careers. Some only completed student teaching; others taught for a few years and then left the classroom. These people lack credibility. I don"t feel you are qualified to criticize unless you"ve proven that you could do better under similar circumstances. I am especially disdainful of quantitative research that "proves" a particular intervention has an impact on student achievement. These quasi-experimental designs are usually supported by a team of university personnel who leave the classroom as soon as their study is completed. The number crunching controls for factors that are absolutely seminal to the success or failure of the intervention in real life. Because these researchers don"t have the experience of living through a cycle of educational reform, they don"t acknowledge the possibility that their intervention worked simply because it was different, and in a few months it won"t be. They don"t notice that maybe it worked because there were several extra pairs of adult eyes in the room when the intervention was going on. They don"t respect the fact that, after experiencing a few of these reform cycles, teachers become skeptical and leery of upending their classrooms to accommodate a novelty.

Once a study is completed, the findings are then disseminated in the form of articles that my sister, a senior policy analyst for the National Education Association, once described as "unreadable sawdust"—laden with jargon and wooden prose. After nearly four years in academia, I still struggle to read and understand this work. I do not expect that even the above-average practitioner has time or inclination to read this work, begging the questions: Who do these studies serve and for what purpose?

Thus, I find myself hopping back and forth across the fence that separates the worlds of research and practice. In some ways, this study attempts to reconcile those two worlds. The research on supervision has remained separate from the practice supervision. I'd like to bring them together, to get the research "out of the library," as my committee chair would say. Of course, reformers are usually hell-bent on reforming everyone *else's* behavior and less mindful of the need for self-reflection. Like the researchers I hold in such contempt, I have an annoying habit of assuming that not only must I be right, but anyone who doesn't agree with me must be wrong. I develop very clear mental pictures of what I expect, and when these pictures do not match what I see, I often assume it is reality's fault, not my imagination's.

In the course of trying to set me up on a blind date, a friend described me to the guy as follows: "She's really smart, and as a result she can be cruel." Not surprisingly, the date never materialized, but I've held that description close ever since because there is so much truth in it. It is never my intention to be cruel. I was simply raised in an environment where excellence was the baseline. Several years into my career, I published an article and sent a photocopy to Dad; he sent it back with margin comments. I have internalized my father's expectations, and they often make me impatient with those who do not share them. Only recently have I begun to understand that my experience was neither normal nor particularly useful. My own teacher behavior was extreme, and, while it allowed some amazing things to happen in the classroom, it came at a cost. My intensity and perfectionism led to a combination of depression, anxiety, and insomnia that ultimately required medication. Few individuals take their careers—or anything else—to such lengths, nor should they.

Nietzsche warned, "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster." I have begun a journal documenting both my progress through the

dissertation process as well as my thoughts on each development. When my own narrow-mindedness stares back at me from the page, I am able to see it and squelch it—or at least keep it penned up in well-lighted area. It is my expectation that this writing should aid in my self-discovery and slow my descent into monsterism. In the journal, as well as this subjectivities statement, I am trying to make explicit to myself what my expectations are as well as what the realities are and to look at both, if not impassively, realistically. As I collect and analyze data, my commitment must be to see what is *there*, not only what is missing.

I did not anticipate that the teachers or supervisors in my study would be remarkably different from the teachers and supervisors with whom I spent my career. The bottom feeders would decline to participate, so I did not expect to see any truly intransigent behavior from the teachers. The genuinely great teachers are few and far between, but they tend to want people to know what‟s happening in their classrooms. It was possible some truly superlative teachers and supervisors would end up in my sample.

The major difference I expected to see was in how the supervisors and teachers talked about the observation. In fact, my discussions with the principal of the school where I collected data had me both excited and concerned. My excitement was due to her leadership, in particular her approach to supervision which not only encouraged but required intense reflection on the part of the teacher and did not permit supervisors—department chairs or assistant principals—to be arbitrary or careless in their analyses or evaluations. This is how clinical supervision is supposed to work.

This approach was also the cause of my concern. This school sounded very much like an anomaly. The principal even said, “I don‟t know if what we‟re doing is typical.” At the time, I shrugged off her concern, remarking, “Well, we don‟t even know what‟s typical because there‟s

so little research on this topic." I'm not sure I believed that, though. They say confession is good for the soul, so I hereby confess that I was hoping to see bad conferences. If the dyads I saw were doing everything right, what need did the profession have of me?

Appendix B

Questions for Reflection

UHN MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT
POSTOBSERVATION CONFERENCE
REFLECTION DOCUMENT

Staff Member:
Post Conference Date & Time:
Evaluator:

1. What do you see as strengths of this lesson as it was actually taught?

2. Did you alter your instructional plan as you taught the lesson? If so, for what reasons?

3. As you reflect on the lesson, to what extent were students productively engaged? In what ways could the level of active engagement have been increased?

4. In reviewing Phin‟s notes, did any *overarching* threads or patterns emerge for you?

5. In reviewing Phin‟s notes, what *specific* observations, affirmations, or suggestions most resonated with you? Why?

6. Was the *opening 2-3 minutes* of class productive, and did it **set the stage for the learning** that was to occur?

7. Was the *last 2-3 minutes* of class productive, and did it bring **closure** to the learning that had occurred?

8. How do you know if students learned the intended outcomes of the lesson, or how will you know? If you used an exit slip, what information about student learning did you gain, and how will it impact your subsequent lessons?

9. If you had the opportunity to teach this lesson again to the same group of students, what would you do differently and why?

10. Other comments:

Appendix C

Why I Had to Travel 800 Miles to Gather Data: A Cautionary Tale

Georgia school systems‟ unwillingness to grant me access may have been due to the private nature of supervision conferences and the perception of all educational supervision as shrouded in mystery and political intrigue (Smylie & Crowson, 1993). Some of these administrators cited an additional concern. At the time of the study‟s inception, the state of Georgia was competing for a Race to the Top (RTTT) grant. RTTP, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, made available $4 billion to state education departments. One of the two non-negotiable criteria for state eligibility was the willingness to use student achievement data, in the form of test scores, to evaluate teachers and principals. Said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, “We believe great teachers matter tremendously. When you‟re reluctant or scared to make that link [between test scores and student achievement], you do a grave disservice to the teaching profession and to our nation‟s children” (McNeil, 2009, para. 5).

Georgia‟s governor had proposed new legislation that would “require the State Board of Education to adopt a common evaluation tool” (Perdue, 2010, para. 3). The new law would tie teacher compensation to “a teacher‟s overall effectiveness with 50% of that being the academic progress of an individual teacher‟s students” (Perdue, 2010, para. 4). Despite the fact that this legislation, if passed, would not take effect until 2014, school districts responded almost immediately by circling the wagons around their supervisory and evaluation practices. Districts seemed reluctant to allow scrutiny of those practices by a stranger.

Logistics also forced me to abandon my plans to conduct my research in the district in which the university was located. Given my own experience, I assumed that gaining entrée to

these schools required only a good relationship with the upper level administration at any given school. In fact, because Georgia lacked a strong teacher‟s union, I expected it would be easier to access study participants here than in Illinois, where I had spent my teaching career. I was quickly disabused of that idea when I discovered the procedures university researchers must follow to gain access to any school in the district. The first criterion was that my study must not only benefit humanity. I must also make explicit how the study would serve one or more of the district‟s goals. The second hurdle was that I could not take my study directly to a school. A university liaison in the College of Education must first approve it. She would then apply to the district‟s superintendent, who could then accept or reject it. If accepted, the plan could then be pitched to one or more schools. Had I known how cumbersome the process was, I might have begun it six months to a year earlier. As it stood, I could only weigh the pros and cons of pursuing this course of action.

Navigating educational bureaucracies to gain approval for any innovation is usually a lengthy process. I considered the possibility that, having patiently followed proper channels, the superintendent might still reject the plan, particularly in light of the impending RTTT legislation. I further considered that individual principals might deny me access despite the superintendent‟s approval. Finally, assuming a best-case scenario of approval all the way down, the process might take so long that the data would no longer be available for collection in the current academic year. In consultation with my committee chair, I decided that the possible benefits of conducting research locally did not outweigh the risk that the study might not happen. As my methodologist so candidly put it, “I don‟t care where you get your data, as long as you get it.”

Appendix D

Target sheet

Strategy one: Clear Targets

Foods 1: Microwave Unit Name: _____		I need a lot of help. I am lost.	I need a little help.	I made a small mistake	My work is perfect
I know power settings and how to use them on the microwave	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
I know the parts of a microwave	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
Magnetron tube Stirrer blades Glass plate-rotating					
I know how food composition affects cooking time	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
Fat Sugar Water Salt					
I know how microwaves cook food	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
I know 4 cooking principles to guide cooking	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
Density Shape and size Starting temperature Amount of food					
I know materials safe to microwave	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
I know principles about cooking the food properly	Date	m0	m-	m+	m++
I know why standing time is necessary					

Appendix E

Pre- and post-instruction assessment sheet

Your name:_____

Pre-assessment for Principles of Design

Before today's lesson …

I can ***identify*** the following in visual art or designs

	YES	Sort of	NO
Contrast			
Rhythm			
Pattern			
Unity			
Balance			
Emphasis			
Movement			
Proportion			

I can ***define*** the following in visual art or designs

	YES	Sort of	NO
Contrast			
Rhythm			
Pattern			
Unity			
Balance			
Emphasis			
Movement			
Proportion			

POST-assessment

After today's lesson …

I can ***identify*** the following in visual art or designs

	YES	Sort of	NO
Contrast			
Rhythm			
Pattern			
Unity			
Balance			
Emphasis			
Movement			
Proportion			

I can ***define*** the following in visual art or designs

	YES	Sort of	NO
Contrast			
Rhythm			
Pattern			
Unity			
Balance			
Emphasis			
Movement			
Proportion			

Ways I can improve my understanding of the principles of design: